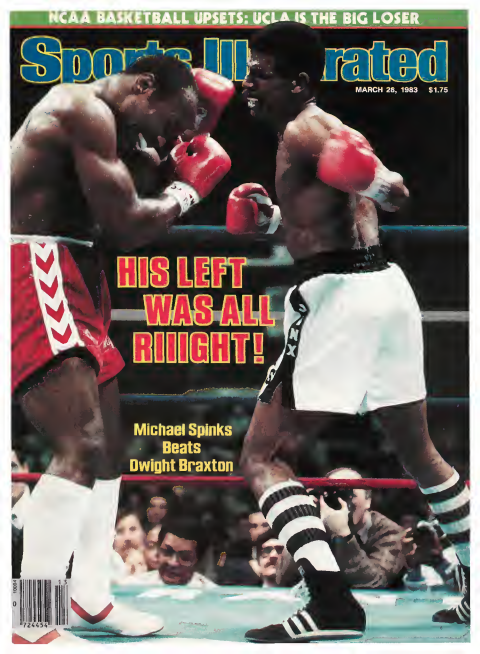


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Sports Illustrated

MARCH 26, 1983 \$1.75



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LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Freelance writer Jack Falla, whose story on top NHL prospect Pat LaFontaine begins on page 38, has three rather disparate heroes. "The individuals I'm most intrigued by are Jacques Plante, the great NHL goalie, Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys and Thorau," he says. That explains why Falla has, at his home in Natick, Mass., three editions of Walden, 26 Beach Boys LPs

This spring, when he isn't playing at the Omni or staking tomato plants to broken hockey sticks—"KOHs grow the best tomatoes," he says—Falla will be found at his typewriter. Which is where he generally has been ever since he graduated from Boston University in 1967. Thereafter he worked in sports information and public relations at Babson College and spent two years as

a copywriter and publicist for a Boston ad agency. "That was my only brush with what [SI Senior Writer] Dan Jenkins calls the Eastern, striped-tie, lock-jaw Establishment, and it convinced me to stick with sports," says Falla. After a season as a p.r. man for the NASL's Boston franchise, he became director of development and unpaid hockey coach at the Rivers School in Weston, Mass., and a freelance writer on the side.



FALLA: HE'S A WRITER HOOKED ON PLANTE AND PLANTS

(including a real find, the Christmas album) and a hockey net in his driveway.

Actually, the net is now sitting in the driveway because the arrival of spring has melted Falla's homemade rink. Last week, during breaks in reporting and writing the LaFontaine story, Falla chopped up the remaining chunks of ice on the rink, removed the boards and rolled up the 70x40-foot sheet of plastic over which water had been frozen to make the rink's surface. Skates stored away. Falla is now ready for street hockey and maybe a little stickball.

"We've played every sport imaginable here at the Bacon Street Omni, as we call the area around the house," says Falla, 38, whose playmates include son Brian, 11, and daughter Tracey, 9. "The garage windows have all been shot out by tennis balls. Brian set up a three-hole golf course in the yard, and once we even tried building a ski jump from the top of the garage. But the jumper would have hit the neighbor's fence at break-neck speed, so we decided we'd better drop that."

"That's where I discovered Jack Falla," says SI Associate Writer Ed Swift. "I was the editor of *Hockey Magazine*, and we bought a 10-line poem he sent us in 1977. We paid him \$15." The poem was the first writing on hockey sold by Falla, who later became a "roving editor" for the now-defunct publication.

Falla started freelancing full time in 1979, when he signed his first book contract, for a history of the NCAA. His second book, on Boston College sports, was published March 1. When we were looking for a writer to do some hockey stories last fall, Swift suggested Falla, who has since written nine pieces for SI. "I love freelancing," says Falla. "I was prepared for it to be tough, but, aided and abetted by Barbie the Nurse [his wife Barbara, an R.N.] and with a 9% mortgage, I'm doing all right."

Truth is, you're better than all right, Jack.

Philip D. Harber

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BOOKTALK

by JEREMIAH TAX

RENEE RICHARDS' "SECOND SERVE" IS A BOOK ABOUT TWO REMARKABLE PEOPLE

For many months in 1976 and '77 the country's sports pages and television screens and conversations in medical, psychiatric and purely social circles were awash with the names Dr. Richard Raskind and Dr. Renee Richards. Raskind, an eminent eye specialist and, to a much lesser extent, tournament tennis player, had undergone transsexual treatment and surgery and become Richards, and was seeking certification as a female tournament player. What should be done about this?

Many of the answers to that question in print, on TV and even in medical cir-

cles at the time were ill-informed or emotionally interperate or merely smart-alecky nonsense. Now Richards (with writer John Ames) offers her account of the events leading up to her transsexual experience, the treatment itself and its aftermath (*Second Serve*, Stein and Day, \$16.95). It's a provocative book about a remarkable person—perhaps two remarkable people.

Dick Raskind was raised in Queens, N.Y., the second child of Dr. S. Muriel Bishop, a neurologist-turned-psychiatrist who kept her maiden name when she married, and Dr. David Raskind, an orthopedist. (Although the author doesn't say so in her book, she has changed the names of her mother and some other members of the family.) Five years before Dick's birth, Bishop had had a girl whom, in frustration over the fact that the child had not been a boy, she named Michael. Beginning almost in infancy, Dick would get up early, climb into his parents' bed and cling to his mother until

she arose. He stayed with her while she bathed and dressed, fascinated by the transformation of the warm, feminine person with whom he slept into the severely tailored, aggressive person prepared to compete in her male-dominated profession. This daily routine persisted—astonishingly—until Dick was on the verge of adolescence. Not surprisingly, psychiatrists today believe that such childhood experiences can later cause sexual confusion.

Dick's father, devoted to a busy practice, left home early and came back late. But even when he was there, the household was thoroughly dominated by the presence, the commands and the loud and often querulous voice of his mother. Early on, his older sister and mother dressed Dick regularly in girls' clothing, while Michael was encouraged to dress and act like a tomboy. Apparently this didn't distress Dick too much, but once, when he was forced into a dress and lace underwear for a neighborhood children's

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party, he rebelled; he was overwhelmed and dragged off to the party and cringing at the memory of the experience for years. His father never interfered with any of this.

One wonders what was going through the minds of these two highly trained professionals that permitted—or, perhaps, impelled—them to establish such a psychologically nightmarish home environment. On the evidence of this book, they didn't think about it at all; years later, when Dick finally appraised them of his transsexuality, his mother was astonished. "But, Dick, you were such a normal boy!" she exclaimed. She never once discussed any aspect of his transsexuality with him before she died in the early '60s. David Raskind has not broached the subject to this day.

Whatever else happened to Dick as he grew up, he also developed into a fine athlete. He won his first of many tennis club championships at age 10. A quarterback and end in football, he also was good enough as a prep pitcher to attract the attention of major league scouts (after throwing a no-hitter and once striking out the side on nine pitches in relief). In his late teens he stood 6'1", weighed about 180, was strongly muscled and, while not exceptionally fast, was a dangerous tennis opponent for all but the top players in the game. He was captain of the Yale team; twice won the All-Navy championship while serving as a lieutenant commander at St. Albans Hospital; won the New York State clay-court title in 1964; and was still ranked sixth nationally in the men's 35-and-over division in 1972. If these successes sound kind of neat but hardly all that exceptional, they become extraordinary in the light of several considerations. In contrast to many of today's tennis champions, Raskind was a serious student, apprentice or practitioner in a demanding discipline even while he played serious tennis: through Ivy League pre-med, medical school at the University of Rochester, two years of seven-days-a-week internship at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York City, two years of residency at Manhattan Eye and Ear Hospital and two more as chief eye surgeon at St. Albans, caring for Vietnam war victims.

For nine of those years he also was undergoing five-sessions-a-week psychoanalysis. From about the age of three until transsexual surgery at the age of 40, his

inner life was a maelstrom of psychic warfare, threatening daily to tear him apart and expose him to friends and colleagues unaware of his plight.

Second Serve's thesis is that inside Richard Raskind there were always two people, Dick and Renee, battling for ascendancy. Life as a homosexual was no solution, though Richard tried it. Dick, the book claims, was a fully heterosexual male, and Renee is a fully heterosexual female. Dick's clear advantages were his well-developed masculine body and public recognition as a male. When he was in full command, Richard's sex life was a series of successful affairs with beautiful women, all covered in explicit detail in this book. He married in 1970 and fathered a child. Under Renee's sway, Richard acquired an extensive wardrobe of women's clothes and used them regularly in nighttime forays to transsexual hangouts wherever he lived and on vacation trips to Europe. Psychiatric help was unavailing; indeed, his last analyst (for three years) was no less a personage than the head of the New York Psychoanalytic Society, whose behavior, in the face of Richard's implacable problems, seems almost farcical. Eventually Richard sought transsexual treatment and surgery and, after many abortive attempts, got it at Physicians' Hospital in Queens. This process, too, is explicitly set forth in *Second Serve*.

Medical opinion on the causes and possible cures of cases of sexual confusion, which are far more widespread than many suppose, is highly fragmented. Nevertheless, most psychoanalysts don't accept the book's description of Richard's problem or the solution he submitted to. They think that sexual confusion stems largely from fantasizing, however muted, and should be treated as early as possible in childhood by traditional or innovative methods other than surgery. One highly respected institution specializing in the subject—the Johns Hopkins Gender Identity Clinic—suspended its own surgical procedures some years ago, did follow-up studies on its patients and hasn't resumed transsexual operations.

In 1977, after much flap, tennis officialdom accepted Richards as a woman; today, so do her eye patients and, she says, the men in her life. Except for the inability to bear children, she asserts, she's a whole woman. The book makes her case.

END



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EDITED BY JERRY KIRSHENBAUM

MR. AVERAGE JOE TOUCHDOWN

A wide-ranging survey on attitudes that Americans aged 14 and over have toward sports was released last week, and the key findings were wholly unsurprising. Conducted by a New York City firm, Research & Forecasts, Inc., and underwritten by Miller Lite beer, which does a lot of sports-related advertising, the survey found that football was the most popular spectator sport, with baseball second and basketball third, and that swimming was the favorite participant sport, followed by football and, tied for third, baseball/softball and basketball. The only one of these findings that seemed mildly unexpected was that so many adults still relished mixing it up on a football field. But it must be supposed that many respondents' definition of "playing football" included touch and, possibly, just tossing the ball around in the backyard.

But an eye-opener or two cropped up in less publicized portions of the 200-page report. For example, 45% of the 1,319 respondents (576 male, 743 female) said that when watching their favorite sport they sometimes felt that, given the right training, they could do as well as the athletes. The figure shot up to a startling 74% among respondents aged 14 to 17 and was a still hefty 25% among those 65 or over. Since the "favorite sport" in question would presumably be one played at the professional or at least the major-college level, these findings seemed to raise a troubling question: Do Americans have an unhealthy capacity for self-delusion?

We're happy to report that an authority we questioned on the subject, Dr. Stanley Cheren, an associate professor of psychiatry at the Boston University School of Medicine, isn't alarmed. Cheren says that one reason many respondents might think they could perform as well as top-level athletes is that they "have difficulty recognizing what it means to be gifted. By and large it's only the gifted who have a sense of 'giftedness.' Other people confuse their own willingness to work hard with what happens in sports and the arts, where the few gifted individuals who work hard achieve in a different way from the rest of humanity." Cheren conceded that it would

take a considerable amount of fantasizing for, say, a 55-year-old woman to think she could beat Martina Navratilova. But he says that in most cases this sort of thinking is essentially healthy—"a way of taking a little holiday in your mind" is how he puts it—and is one of the things that helps make viewing sports so widely appealing.

Of course, if that many people think they could perform as well as the big-time athletes they watch, it's scarcely any wonder that, in yet another of the survey's findings, 76% of the respondents said they believed that pro athletes are overpaid. We have long realized that a lot of people felt that way, but we never knew why. Now we do.

WIN ONE, LOSE ONE

North Carolina State's surprising victory in this year's ACC basketball tournament may have cost the Wolfpack baseball team a game. The N.C. State nine, playing at home on March 13, was leading the University of North Carolina Charlotte 7-2 with two out in the seventh and last inning of the opening game of a double-header. With the Wolfpack just one out from victory, many of the 100 fans at Doak Field were directing their full attention to portable radios to hear the account of the closing seconds of the ACC basketball title game between N.C. State and Virginia in Atlanta. Reporters in the baseball press box were watching the Atlanta game on TV, as were N.C. State students in a couple of large dormitories beyond the leftfield fence. And when the final buzzer sounded in Atlanta, with the Wolfpack winning 81-78, a mighty roar erupted from the stands, press box and dorms in Raleigh.

Alas, what should have been a game-ending grounder off the bat of UNC Charlotte Catcher Chuck McGee was entering the glove of N.C. State Shortstop Doug Strange at that very moment. Apparently flustered by the explosion of cheers, Strange started to throw to second for a forceout, hesitated and then tried to get McGee at first. The throw was wide, pulling First Baseman Tim Barbour off the base. Following Strange's error the 49ers scored five runs in the inning to tie the game and added three

more in the eighth for a stunning 10-7 extra-inning victory.

Although Strange is too sporting a fellow to hold the Pack basketball team wholly responsible for his costly miscue, he allowed that the fact that "everybody went crazy" at so inopportune a moment had been a contributing factor. "The noise was part of it," he said, proving, one supposes, that insofar as North Carolina State athletics are concerned, every silver lining has a cloud.

GUARANTEED VICTORIES

In early January the Golden Bay Earthquakes of the Major Indoor Soccer League came up with what seemed at the time like a swell promotional idea. The Quakes announced a "guaranteed vic-



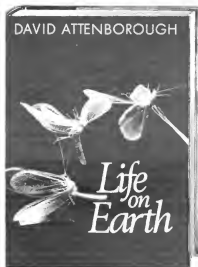
tures" scheme in which, for the next two months, every fan attending a home game that Golden Bay lost would, by producing his ticket stub from that game, receive a free ticket to any other home game of his choice.

The Quakes got more than they bargained for—and so did the fans. After the plan went into effect, Golden Bay lost its next seven home games. That meant that a fan who bought a ticket for the first game—at prices ranging from \$4 to \$9—could have, assuming he continued to redeem tickets after each loss, attended the next six games at no extra charge. Despite the home team's sorry showing—

continued

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or, more accurately, because of it—the average crowd at the Oakland Coliseum increased over the course of the seven games from 3,700 to 4,300; by Game No. 7, freebies were accounting for 30% of attendance.

The offer expired two weeks ago, but not before the Golden Bay management decided to take a more conventional approach to attracting fans. It fired Coach Roger Thompson, under whom the Quakes had a 9-21 record this season. Led by new Coach Don Popovic, they beat the Kansas City Comets 7-5 in their next game for their first home victory, guaranteed or otherwise, in more than two months.

CAPTAIN'S CHOICE

Senior Writer Frank Deford offers this postscript to his recent report on Argentina's Davis Cup victory over the U.S. in Buenos Aires (SI, March 14): "I've been covering Davis Cups for almost 20 years, and I continue to be appalled at the way the order of competition is determined. The two captains decide which singles players will be used, and then a couple of politicians pull the names out of a hat—or, usually, a silver bowl, to be fancy. So it was in Argentina that Gené Mayer and Guillermo Vilas came to be chosen for the opening match, and it was the luck of that draw that continued to decide the matter thereafter. This makes about as much sense as having the two World Series managers put the names of their starting pitchers in a hat and then letting a mayor or local Congressman determine the pitching rotation by lot.

"It would be far better if the captains settled their own fate. The visiting captain would be given the first choice. For example, in Argentina, Arthur Ashe could have said that he wanted John McEnroe in the opening match. Or maybe he would have wanted McEnroe in the last of the four singles matches. He also would have been allowed to pass, which would have thrown the pressure on the Argentine captain.

"Under such an arrangement, the captains, not chance, would be in command of the situation. They would be put more on the spot, and speculation about their decisions would create a great deal more interest. So would the second-guessing, which is a proper part of sport. There's something else. Right now, the home-court advantage in the Davis Cup can be

considerable. Giving the visiting captain either first choice, which would enable him to lead with his strongest suit, or the right to pass, which would force the home team to show its hand, might even out the competition a little."

SEXUAL EQUALITY AT AUBURN

Who says women's sports aren't catching up to, or in some cases even surpassing, men's sports? Certainly not anybody at Auburn, whose women's basketball team began NCAA tournament play last week—the Lady Tigers beat Missouri 89-76 in first-round action—with a reserve center, 6' 7" freshman Pascale Van Roy, who's an inch taller than the center on the men's team, Charles Barkley.

LLONG LLIVE LLOYD

As the NBA regular season winds down, it's looking more and more like the end of the line for the Scott Lloyd Fan Club. That's because it also appears to be the end of the line for Lloyd, a journeyman center who had a 4.6-points-per-game average to show for his six years in the league before being released by the Dallas Mavericks on Dec. 21. The obvious question concerning the Scott Lloyd Fan Club, of course, is why Scott Lloyd? "It was a kind of social statement," the club president, Steve Simmons, a senior at the University of Texas, wistfully explains.

But maybe further explanation is necessary. Simmons is a native of Buffalo, and in 1978, when he was still in high school, he and some buddies for some reason took a fancy to Lloyd, who had just joined the local NBA team, the Braves, after being waived by his original club, the Milwaukee Bucks. The guys started going to Braves games and cheering for their new hero. "It was a special feeling being the only people out of 15,000 screaming our lungs out for Scott Lloyd," Simmons says. "Especially when he was on the bench."

Simmons and some of the other fan club members went off to college, where they fleshed out the ranks of the faithful with new recruits. Lloyd's loyalists continued to follow their man even after he and the team moved to San Diego, and after he was traded to the Chicago Bulls and signed as a free agent with the Mavericks. They showed up at the nearest NBA arena to lead the 6' 10" Lloyd moral support whenever he was in town, dis-

played sheets reading LLONG LLIVE LLOYD, developed their own secret handshake and circulated a quarterly newsletter that reminded members to vote for Lloyd for the NBA All-Star team. When Lloyd played in Italy during the 1979-80 season, club officers called his mother in Scottsdale, Ariz. to keep tabs on him. They included Ron Kaminker, a junior at Penn and vice-president of offensive affairs, meaning he kept track of Lloyd's scoring totals, and Dan Merrick, a Michigan junior and vice-president of defensive affairs, meaning he compiled stats on Lloyd's attempted rebounds. Lloyd's actual rebounds amounted to just 3.0 per game during his career.

Lloyd is properly appreciative of his fan club's unwavering support. "It was embarrassing at times, but it was a fun kind of embarrassment," he says. After the Mavs put Lloyd on waivers, club members hoped he would be picked up by some NBA team or other and, indeed, there was a recent news report that the San Diego Clippers had done just that. But the story proved erroneous, cruelly dashing the hopes of the Scott Lloyd Fan Club, whose devastation over his apparently permanent departure from the NBA is compounded by the fact that it had formally designated 1983 as the Year of Our Lloyd.

THEY SAID IT

- Joe Klein, Texas general manager, after country singer and former Negro Leagues bullplayer Charley Pride, a switch hitter, struck out twice for the Rangers in an exhibition game against the Yankees. "Charley showed us he could hit three ways—left, right and seldom."
- Pete Rose, on Phillies Manager Pat Corrales' plan to spell him at first base sometimes with Tony Perez, depending in part on who's pitching for the opposition: "Tony can have Steve Rogers, Nolan Ryan, Mario Soto and Joe and Phil Niekro, and I'll take the rest."
- Jim Valvano, North Carolina State basketball coach: "I don't like all those TV time-outs. I run out of things to say to my team."
- Mickey Rivers, Texas Ranger outfielder, denying that he'd have problems with owner George Steinbrenner or Manager Billy Martin if, as rumored, he were to return to the Yankees. "Me and George and Billy are two of a kind."



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A Crowning Achievement



Michael Spinks reigns over all the light heavies after defeating Dwight Braxton
by WILLIAM NACK



CONTINUED



Spinks employed a simple and successful strategy of jabbing continuously to set up his right and keep Braxton off balance.

Michael Spinks rolled out of bed, walked across the room in his suite at the Claridge Hotel in Atlantic City and deposited his angular frame into an easy chair next to the window. Twelve stories below and half a block away, as the Atlantic Ocean broke against the beach beyond the boardwalk, a few hardy strollers leaned into the gusts of wind and driving rain as they headed for their hotels.

Spinks glanced out into the darkness and stretched in the chair, his bare feet on the floor. He was wearing a cap bearing the inscription I'M THE BOSS above the bill. His eyes were only half open, his voice a groan. "Ohhh. I'm sore," said the new undisputed light heavyweight champion of the world, his left cheek resting in

the palm of his hand. "I stayed until they closed the party down this morning; I was still dancin' going out the door. My waistline is sore from the dancin' and my neck is tired and sore from the fight. I was hodin' my head and Braxton was hittin' me in the neck with those round-house punches. I'm achin'."

It was nearing 11 last Saturday night, almost 24 hours after Spinks, the WBA's titleholder, had taken away Dwight Braxton's WBC crown, winning a unanimous 15-round decision in Atlantic City's Convention Hall. He had kept Braxton at bay with his jab and off balance by making himself a highly evasive target. Each

Braxton figured if he couldn't hit Spinks, he'd still find a way to stick it to him.



man earned a guaranteed \$1.2 million—a record purse for the division—and Spinks was now the first undisputed light heavyweight champion since Bob Foster retired in September 1974. Spinks and Marvellous Marvin Hagler, the middle-weight titleholder, are now the only such champions.

Spinks appeared to be recovering as much from the festivities as from the fight. He and his brother Leon, the former world heavyweight champion, hadn't left promoter Butch Lewis' party at Resorts International until 6 a.m. Michael had been mixing champagne and soft drinks with Heineken beer at the party, and later he tossed off a whiskey or two in a bar at the hotel. By then the sun was up.

"Leon fell asleep at the table so I drank his Crown Royal," Michael says. "I laughed all night, listened to arguments and told stories." The party ended up in Michael's suite, where he finally crawled into bed at 2:30 in the afternoon. By 11 p.m., when he was fully awake, the fact that he'd won the most important fight in his life had only begun to sink in.

"I was lying in bed," he said, "and I was thinking, 'I won more than \$1 million last night! And I won the prize!' I kept saying it to myself, over and over again. 'I got him. I got him! I beat that bum, I beat him!' I looked in the headlines in the papers and I kept saying, 'I won! I won!'"

Spinks removed his hat and gave a thought to the inscription "I psyched myself to believe I was going into a very,



The shorter Braxton frequently lunged to get within range to throw his fearsome right.

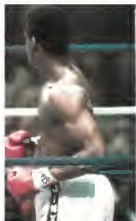
very hard match," he said. "I overestimated him perfectly. I respected his punching ability. When I saw something coming, I moved. He couldn't touch me. The strategy worked very easily." Spinks pointed to his hat. "I'm the boss," he said. "That I am."

Precisely who was the real light heavyweight boss had been a matter of no small debate since Braxton, a graduate of New Jersey's Rahway State Prison (armed robbery, 5½ years), had TKO'd the WBC champion, Matthew Saad Muhammad,

in the 10th round of their fight in December 1981. Braxton had had no amateur experience—Spinks, of course, had won an Olympic gold in 1976—and he whipped Saad in only his 18th pro fight. Five months earlier, Spinks had seized the WBA title on a decision from Eddie Mustafa Muhammad.

What made the prospective Spinks-Braxton match so attractive was their contrasting physiques and boxing styles. The 30-year-old Braxton, blocky and muscular at 5' 6½", with a 19-1-1 record

continued





ord, including 12 knockouts, comes in low and rolling, working off a hard jab while looking for a chance to launch his damaging, if not devastating, right hand. An elusive bobber and weaver, he's also tough to hit, but what distinguishes him is the relentlessness of his attack.

"Braxton reminds me of me," said Archie Moore, who held the light heavyweight title from 1952 to '61. "Something in his style. He carries his aggression with a defensive mechanism built in. It's called scientific locomotion. He also employs

the art of escapology, which is the art of evasiveness. Are you looking at my face? Am I marked up?" asked the man who had 234 fights in a 30-year career.

The 26-year-old Spinks, who was undefeated in 22 fights and had 18 knockouts going into the Braxton bout, is lean and tall (6' 2½"). He's a stand-up fighter whose jab sets up crushing punches with both hands—hooks and uppercuts. He's regarded as one of the true bangers in the sport today.

"Braxton will swarm at me for as long as he can, if he can," Spinks said before the fight. "But he's human. He don't run by business, either. Punches affect him. In the process of swarming, he's got to get hit. I'll do all I can to keep my distance and hit him when he comes in." Asked about his jab, Spinks said emphatically, "Ask me about my jab after the fight."

Braxton's plan was to exert pressure and wear down Spinks with a take-it-to-'em attack. "He can fight either one, two or three ways," Braxton said of Spinks. "The question is whether he's going to run, grab and hold or fight me back. I can see him trying to hold on. Whichever way he fights, I'll be there. I know what I've got to do. I'm the champ. Both titles are on the line. I guess you can call me the underdog, but I like that. The little guy beating up the big guy. That's some people's fantasy. And I welcome the challenge."

In fact, Spinks was the 7-5 favorite by fight time, and that undoubtedly stemmed from reports that Braxton was still suffering from a severe cold he'd caught two weeks before while training in Myrtle Beach, S.C. At a time when he should have been working out rigorously, he had to ease up. At a press conference three days before the fight, Braxton spoke in distinctly nasal tones, but denied he was still ailing. "I was sick," he said. "But I'm through the worst of it. I sweated it out. I'm strong. I'm ready."

He had been fighting the cold for almost two weeks. "We kept him off his feet as long as we could," said co-trainer Quenzell McCall. "We loaded him up with grapefruit and orange juice and gave him aspirin and plenty of rest. And a doctor gave him penicillin. We were con-



The eighth, Braxton's best round, was nearly Spinks' downfall. First, he slipped down.



Later in the eighth, this Braxton left to the stomach—and some foxy footwork—sent Spinks to the canvas for a knockdown.

cerned that he might develop a fever, but fortunately he didn't."

Meanwhile, Spinks trained hard, sparring ferociously, pounding the heavy and speed bags and jumping rope. If there was any concern about Spinks's condition, it had to do with his emotional state. Since last January, when his common-law wife, Sandy Massey, was killed in an automobile accident in Philadelphia, leaving him to care for their 2-year-old daughter, Michelle, Spinks has been walking a psychological tightrope. Four days before the fight, when a reporter asked him about Sandy, he broke down and wept. At a press conference the next day, promoter Lewis beseeched writers not to raise the subject. No one did.

"That has nothing to do with the fight," Spinks told a reporter later in the week. "As far as that goes, only God knows. I wish you would all stop bringing it up to me."

But the most jarring incident of all, the one that most disturbed those around Spinks, occurred in the dressing room just before the fight, when Spinks was waiting to be called to the ring. With 10 minutes to go, Sandy Massey's sister, Sibby, brought Michelle in to see her father. "I was just so stunned to see my baby," Spinks said later. To make matters

worse, the first words out of her mouth were, "Where's Mommy?"

"I couldn't hang on," recalled Spinks. "I couldn't say nothing. I couldn't take it. What can you say to her when she asks that?"

"Michael went to pieces," said one of his trainers, Eddie Futch. "You knew it was hard for him to get his mind on the fight."

But Spinks did just that. He knew exactly what he was going to do from the opening bell and for as long as he could. Futch and Spinks and Spinks's regular trainer, Nelson Brison, had devised a strategy weeks before. It was all the veteran Futch's idea—and a simple one at that. He'd used it successfully years before, in December 1958, when his fighter, Don Jordan, beat hard-hitting Virgil Akins for the world welterweight title.

According to Futch, the plan had three parts:

1) "Jab and move to the right and throw left hooks. When he starts to corner you, you cut back left. Then go right again."

2) "Stay off the ropes and out of the

corners. This is where Braxton is the most effective. If he can stop you along the ropes or in the corners, he can put good combinations together. He throws punches in bunches in there."

3) "Don't throw right-hand leads, even if he tempts you by dropping his left. That's the best thing that Braxton does, rolls that left shoulder and catches the other fighter's right with it and counters with a right."

(continued)



Down, but not for a count: the ref decided this third Spinks tumble was also a slip.



Two big belts for a big better: Spinks is the first fighter to hold the undisputed light heavyweight title since Bob Foster retired in 1974.



SPINKS *continued*

Spinks followed the Futch plan closely enough. Moving to the right, he nullified Braxton's right cross; moving left, he took away Braxton's straight right hand. Almost never did Spinks give Braxton a target. Spinks jabbed and jabbed and jabbed again, round after round, keeping the swarmer from swarming. Spinks had gotten to know a lot about Braxton's tendencies when he was a Spinks sparring partner in 1980, and Spinks was confident that Futch's plan, with Spinks adding a wrinkle here and there, would work.

Between inserting his dentures and adjusting his hat, Leon was as busy as Michael.



Braxton lacked the fire that had been his hallmark. "The cold cleared up, but it didn't go away," he says. "I felt weary. I had a couple of spurts but no fire. My arms felt weary. I was tired, not like 'I can't go anymore,' but I had a drained feeling. He didn't beat me. It really wasn't me. I wanted him to mix it up with me, but he just didn't. He really ran like a chicken. It was like he had a lot of dog in him."

What Spinks had in him, says Futch, was a plan that he understood thoroughly and executed well.

Braxton's best round was the eighth, which he won on all cards. It was also the oddest round of the night. Spinks went down three times, but referee Larry Hazzard ruled only the second descent a knockdown. "The first time Michael went down, it was a slip," says Hazzard. "He was off balance and did not get hit. The second time was from a punch in the stomach. As he was going down, it appeared as though Dwight sort of stepped on his foot. The third was a slip."

No damage was done to Spinks, but Braxton seemed to gain strength. He pursued Spinks, landing two good rights and an uppercut, and then Spinks appeared to tire as he began pushing out his jabs. "Make that jab sharper," Futch told him in the corner after the eighth. "You're laying it out there. You can't do that with this guy." And when the action resumed, Spinks's harder jab was back.

A touch of comic relief was provided by Leon Spinks, who wore a big cowboy hat askew as he urged his brother on between rounds. "Double jab, then the right!" Leon yelled at one point. Glancing over, Michael shouted back, "Leon, straighten out your hat!" Leon grabbed the brim. "Oh, yeah," he said, adjusting it.

Braxton would occasionally put together a flurry of punches, but he couldn't sustain an attack with Spinks jabbing, hooking and moving on him. "I didn't press the issue like I should have," Braxton said.

The fight produced no more in the way of injury than a backyard scuffle among school kids. Braxton had a minor nosebleed, start-

ing in the eighth, but no fighter was ever really in trouble. "Dwight hit me good a couple of times, but I didn't get dazed up at all," Spinks said. "I kept jabbing and moving."

Which is what prompted Braxton to say that Spinks had "a lot of dog in him." Told of the remark by a reporter, Spinks thought at first that Braxton was complimenting him. "I thought he meant I dogged him," Spinks said. No, no. Braxton meant he was running scared. Spinks shrugged. "It doesn't pay to be a gutsy fighter in a fight like that," he said. "You wind up with cuts everywhere. You wind up getting knocked down. You work harder than you really have to."

It was a good fight, but not the great one that the crowd of 9,000 and the HBO television audience had expected. It lacked the dramatic shifts and turns of epic matches, and it hardly did for the light heavyweight division what it was hallyhoodeo to do—lead it from the shadows to the showcase. All it really did, for now, was demonstrate that Michael Spinks is indeed the boss.

END



To Michelle, Michael is the world champion dad.

"It was just right," Spinks said Saturday night. "I knew it was perfect for Braxton's style. I knew that as long as I moved left as well as right, there was nothing he could do. Once, when I was sparring with him, I shut him out for eight rounds—jab, jab, move!"

Spinks won six of the first seven rounds on all cards by doing just that. "I wanted to be like that guy on the TV program, Elliott Ness. Untouchable," he said. "When he tried to swarm me, I was catching him with jabs and hooks. My left hand is awfully sore now, but I was going to work it till it fell off. I bent him with one hand."

Whether he was cautious of coming in on Spinks's right or sapped by the cold,



After Utah's Mannion (above) had helped hang a stunning 67-61 upset on UCLA, Williams, who also scored 18 points, hung himself from the hoop.

From Chaminade to Pace Mannion. Not even one full round was completed before the 1983 NCAA tournament began to resemble the regular season—as whacked-out, rollicking and rules-whipped a campaign as college basketball ever had. And, wouldn't you know it, after the usual upsets by the usual prexies—James Madison, fourth President of the U.S.A., and Mirabeau B. Lamar, second President of the nation of Texas—the pace was made even more improbable by a kid named Pace and a Utah team with the worst won-lost record in the NCAA (or even NIT) field.

For anybody who can recall last Christmas Eve eve when Chaminade, the tiny Hawaiian school that put the hula back into hoops, shocked Virginia and initiated a dizzying trend resulting in eight different teams sharing the mantle of No. 1 in the various polls, it's easy to

This Upset



understand why Utah, 16-13 during the regular season, was able to knock off UCLA, one of those elegant eight.

First, No. 1 isn't much different than No. 101 these days. Second, the tournament really is a brand-new season, just as CBS keeps telling us. And finally, six of those eight número unos didn't look so very marvelouso coming down the stretch: Virginia, North Carolina, Memphis State and UCLA all lost their final pre-NCAA games; Houston and UNLV barely won theirs.

So it was that even before arriving in Boise, Idaho, UCLA Guard Michael Holton labeled his own team "a paper champion." On paper the Bruins' read-out is tradition, experience, superior athleticism. Three of them played in the 1980 championship game. Since then, however, they have become abominably defenseless, and on Saturday Utah Coach

Jerry Pimm taught his UCLA counterpart, Larry Farmer, a tactical lesson. Three Utes were held off the offensive boards to prevent fast breaks. Which meant UCLA had to stand around on offense and Utah could stay close. Which meant the Bruins had a blue and golden opportunity to gag. Which they did, especially in the last 10 minutes.

Utah had sneaked into the tournament as one of the WAC's tri-champions. The Utes had sneaked up on UCLA by upsetting Illinois in the first round, when the fair-haired, 6'7" Mannion, as in reckless abandon, checked Illini star Derek Harper clear out of the contest. Leading the Bruins with 5:37 left, Utah spread out in a delay. All Mannion did then was convert five free throws, smother Rocket Foster with frenetic defense and pitch a glorious three-quarter-court inbound strike to Peter Williams

through the Bruins' sieve for the key breakaway. Toward the end of the 67-61 victory Pimm had to belt his center, Chris Wanaas, with a towel to calm him. "The Cinderella slipper may fit if we keep jamming our foot in it," said Pimm. "We were ugly coming in but we're getting prettier."

Pretty funny was Washington State Coach George Raveling, who showed up in Boise, the City of Trees, to cut down the tallest pine, Virginia's Sampson, and saw off some one-liners. Raveling on Cougar fans chanting "We Want Ralph": "They're actually 50 boosters from the Houston Rockets." On Sampson's height: "I asked Ralph when his birthday was and he said June 1st, 2nd and 3rd." On Washington State's academics as compared with Virginia's: "Our players are so dumb I have to drop bread crumbs so get them to class." State Forward Aar-

Was One Ute Beaut

After defeating UCLA, Utah became the least likely of the NCAA regional qualifiers

by CURRY KIRKPATRICK



on Haskins said the matchup was "like David looking at Goliath. The only weak spot is between the eyes."

Or between the ears. The Cavaliers characteristically lost Sampson—or he lost them; it's difficult to explain these strange disappearances—for most of the second half, during which he took one shot and Virginia was ripe for the whipping. The Cougar matchup zone was forcing the Cavs into passivity (Othell Wilson four of 11 shots, Rick Carlisle reluctant even to breathe), while Haskins and Craig Ehlo, the misplaced beachboy, were combining for 26 points and Washington State was outrebounding Virginia 33-24. But with the Cavs leading 38-34 and 9:18 remaining, Sampson turned the game with two huge defensive plays, a rebound and a blocked shot (that led to easy Cav buckets. Minutes later Sampson contributed another swoop-across-the-lane block, which only he and his shadow could have accomplished, to set up a fast-break three-point play by Wilson. This gave Virginia a 45-40 lead and made it virtually impossible for Wilson to single-handedly blow the game in the clutch, which he seemed eager to do while missing three one-and-one chances. "O, you da man," Assistant Coach Jim Larranaga

continued



The high-jumping Jordan should propel the Tar Heels to championship heights again.

onto the court after Madison's first bucket, ran smack into a fast-breaking, flabbergasted Braddock. Charge? Block? Hospital? Luckily, none of the above. While Sally works on her man-to-man defense, Jordan and Sam Perkins go on to Syracuse, where their slods to the regional title were gressed when the erstwhile hometown Orange was rudely eliminated by Ohio State, 79-74.

Now that 35,000 or so in the Carrier Dome will not be screaming them down, the Tar Heels can concentrate on combating Ohio State's speedy three-guard offense and the creative shooting of Tony Campbell. Perkins may have a picnic against the balding Granville Waiters once Sudden Sam turns in his ballot in the Guess Granville's Age contest.

Meanwhile, St. John's should dispose of quicker Georgia, which earned a tainted Dawg biscuit when James Banks fired the shot heard round the rim—or was it the shot that rimmed round the Heard's—to beat Virginia Commonwealth 56-54. TV replays seemed to show that Georgian Lamar Heard touched the ball within the cylinder, which would have

constituted interference, but Banks got credit for the basket. "Naw, he still didn't touch it," said Dawg Coach Hugh Durham, upon viewing the play later.

The St. John's merry-go-round—"I don't want to get off yet," Coach Lou Carnesecca said—began with the Redmen's season-opening OT victory over Carolina, in which the Tar Heels had a five-point lead and ball possession with 90 seconds to play only to wave it goodbye with uncharacteristically poor foul shooting. But North Carolina is the more improved club now. It's difficult to believe that the marvelous sophomore, Jordan, who has had a Player of the Year season—yes, Ralph fans, the best season—will let it happen again.

MIDWEST: Unfortunately for the citizens of the Commonwealth, the dream match in this regional final between Kentucky and Louisville will again be denied them if only because of Wildcat Coach Joe B. (for Beware?) Hall's aversion to the dreaded K's—Indiana Coach

continued

NCAA BASKETBALL continued

bellowed when Otheil finally made the two free throws that clinched Virginia's 54-49 escape.

Over at Corvallis, Ore., another one of those ACC interlopers, North Carolina State, eliminated another one of those former No. 1's, Las Vegas, when Thurl Bailey's tip-in beat the Rebels 71-70.

Another upset came in the Midwest, Iowa trouncing Missouri 77-63 to leave 13 of the 16 seeds still dancing. The winners moved on to this week's regional sites in Syracuse, Knoxville, Kansas City and Ogden. Winners there will fill out the Final Four in Albuquerque on Easter weekend. Hopping right along:

EAST: North Carolina began defense of its national championship with an extra-long practice scrimmage without a clock—"We wanted to wake us up," Coach Dean Smith said. James Madison may have come to sleep after its upset of West Virginia; anyway, the Tar Heels whaled the Dukes 68-49, even though Michael Jordan played practically the entire second half with four fouls and Jimmy Braddock played with a crush on a James Madison cheerleader. That would be Sally Nay, who, having raced



Banks (left) received the credit for Georgia's winning basket, but VCU argued Heard tipped it in illegally.



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Bobby Knight and the city of Knoxville, where Hall is a dreadful 1-10 lifetime.

Last week Kentucky shook off the Ohio U. Bobcats, but Indiana's Bob, having lost one half of the streak-shooting Witchel Twins—Ted Kitchel went down to back surgery but Randy Wittman remains—has regrouped the Hoosiers and kept them winning on emotion, ball control and defense. Moreover, without Kitchel the offense has more continuity and the defense is quicker, better able to deal with Kentucky's massive postman, Melvin Turpin, and the gifted rookie Kenny (Sky) Walker. It will take a supreme effort for the Hoosiers to repeat December's 62-59 win over Kentucky, but that's what Knight's teams usually deliver, isn't it?

Louisville seems to have too many weapons for both Arkansas and Indiana. Two wins would send Denny Crum to the Final Four for the fifth time in his 12 coaching years and cap the careers of the brothers McCray: Carlton Lamont (Scooter) and the stoical Rodney, a.k.a. Hard. As in hard to stop, to rattle, to beat, to get pub. It's not hard to see that Rodney is the most underrated player in many a season. While the versatile Cards still dunk and block anything that isn't baited down—Charles Jones, take a bow—they can press and play position defense too, run like the dickens or slow down to set it up.

MIDWEST: This is the celebrity regional, Houston's Phi Slamma Jammas, Keith Lee of Memphis State. The Villanova Killer P's, John Pinone and E-Z Ed Pinckney. Missouri's S-O-S squad, Steve Stipanovich and Jon Sunvold. Whoops, scrub the S-O-S. Which is what Iowa's Twin Towers, Greg Stokes and Michael Payne, did while ham 'n' egging for 41 points in the Hawkeye upset. Then there was the other pair of World Trade Centers, Georgetown's Pat Ewing versus Lee, commanding generals leading their troops in blue and gray near the Mason-Dixon Line at the sub-regional in Louisville. This time the gray won 66-57 as Lee outscored and outrebounded a fouled-up Ewing 28 and 15 to 24 and nine (with four missed dunks).

In K.C., Houston's 7-footer, Akeem Olatunji, will get much more help inside and out than Ewing did. In fact Larry (Mr. Mean) Micheaux will probably do the honors on Lee until he roams into Olatunji's territory. But in Hous-

ton's 60-50 victory over Maryland, sloppy Cougar half-court defense and shabby foul shooting were exposed. The Terps were able to pass the ball 94 times on one trip downcourt and the Phis didn't register a single slamma until Clyde Drexler's game-ending jamma. "They tried to play a con game and it didn't work," said the Gilde. "I let out frustration on that last one. I wish I could have broken the backboard."

The Cougars are just too slick and powerful for Iowa—Micheaux's tattoos alone are enough to scare the entire Big Ten—but Villanova is a cat of a different color. Namely, black and blue. Rolie Massimino's intelligent, and physical, gang is fresh from the Big East wars, and the Cats seemed to be over their year-end slump in the coast past Lamar, which got that far by upsetting Alabama. The 'Nova team strengths are designed to beat a bunch just like the Cougars: a barbed-wire all-court press that will test the suspect Houston guards, and one of the nation's best delay games. If the in-and-out Pinckney and the off-and-on Stewart Granger are in and on, Villanova should advance.

WEST: O.K., so what are we to make of Big Ralph? Is this it? Will the titan of the age pull up short of the finish, his goal unfulfilled, his career ended on the campus of . . . Weber State?

Consider the circumstances in Ogden: Utah will have run out of mirrors against N.C. State. The Wolfpack, lacking the ACC's three-point rule, which seven-year teammates Sidney Lowe and Derek Whittenburg lived on from 17,750 feet, or whatever it is, cannot be expected to repeat its ACC tournament upset of Virginia twice in 13 days. The task of thwarting Sampson, then, remains for Boston College, which dispatched Princeton 51-42 in the second round after the sophisticated Tigers had shocked Oklahoma State 56-53 in the first round. (Mamas, don't let your Cowboys grow up to play lyes.)

Looking ahead to BC-UVA, what if Eagle Coach Gary Williams, one of the truly inventive minds in the business,



Villanova's D made it a (Randy) Gray day for Lamar.

works the game to a frazzle? What if the swarming Eagle press bothers the Virginia ball handlers, while muscular 6'8" John Garriss and heady 6'11" Jay Murphy collapse on Sampson down low? What if, at the other end, BC's Michael Adams, the yo-yo man, can confuse the Cav defenses enough for Garriss to be effective in the key and for Murphy to bury bunches of his long one-handers? Imagine if the looney-goosey Eagles achieve a solid lead and force a shaky, coughing Virginia to chase? WAHOOO WAYLAD IN THE WASATCH. Nobody would feel stunned if all of this happens. Just sort of sad that Sampson, the college student who passed up the bucks to stay in school, did not accomplish all he desired.

If the Final Four, then, turn out to be BC, Villanova, Louisville and North Carolina—and here is one vote for the Tar Heels to repeat as champions—the craziest outcome of this craziest season would be that Ralph Sampson, 7'4" Goliath that he is, ultimately finished up as a sentimental favorite.



The starts are always savage in the international cross-country championships. Hundreds of the world's best runners slash through the turf with half-inch spikes, shoving for position. In the men's race last Sunday at Riverside Park in Gateshead, in the north of England, Olympic 5,000- and 10,000-meter champion Miruts Yifter of Ethiopia was hurled down and kicked out of the back of the mob like a rugby ball. His teammate, defending champion Mohammed Kedir, lost a shoe and had to go back for it.

It was the same in the women's race. Seconds after the gun, the U.S. team had to pick its way through a sea of mud in front of its starting gate. Soon the Americans were boxed behind slowing Spanish and Swedish runners, while the favored Soviets roared past on firmer ground.

"I saw that if someone didn't break through the girls ahead, we'd be stuck," said Jan Merrill later. She had been second to Norway's Grete Waitz in this race in 1981, but this year an injured right hamstring had cut into her training. Yet she wanted to help her team. "I knew if I made myself the point, they'd come

It Was A Muddy Good Show Of Teamwork

through," she said. She wedged a space, and teammates Margaret Groos, Joan Benoit and Betty Springs followed.

After 800 meters of the 4,072-meter race, Merrill had brought the U.S. women back into contention, but they were still well behind a dense pack of five Soviets, led by 3,000-meter world-record holder Svetlana Ulmasova. Only Waitz was near the U.S.S.R. contingent, bleeding from a spike wound in the hand. "Margaret, come on let's go," Merrill said to Groos. "She talked us through the whole thing." Groos would say later. "She practically made me cry about three times. It was the most emotional race I've ever run."

The four, the exact number needed for a full team score, were 11th through 14th at the halfway point. Soon, Ulmasova's

The U.S. women finished first in the World Cross-Country meet; the men took second **by KENNY MOORE**

pace broke everyone but teammate Tatyana Pozdnyakova and Waitz. The Norwegian, who had won from 1978 through 1981, was running with a right knee sore from tendinitis, which had required a series of cortisone injections.

Merrill had led her crew into striking position, but she was incapable of moving farther up. Benoit surged on, with Springs and Groos following closely. Ahead, the Soviets were coming apart. They had misjudged the severity of the course and begun too hard. Benoit, Springs and Groos moved to 5-6-7 with 600 meters to go. Up front, Waitz was

The women fought grimly for position on a tough English course with tricky footing.

running away from the Soviets to win her fifth world championship. Alison Wiley of Canada, a freckled Stanford freshman from Toronto, just caught Putnyakova in the stretch for second. Benoit and Springs overhauled Ulmasova before the line to get fourth and fifth, and four seconds later Groos was in ninth. The gallant Merrill hung on for 13th. Behind her, the Soviets' Yelena Sipatova, a former 10,000-meter world-record holder, fell to 21st, and the U.S. was the world champion, 31 points to 41 for the U.S.S.R.

Merrill almost couldn't get her sweats on for the hugs from her tearful, grateful teammates. "I've felt more a part of this team than any other," she said.

In the men's race Alberto Salazar could help his team best by winning. He hoped for brutal conditions. "The more miserably sloppy and hilly, the better," he said. "Not because I like it but because it bothers everyone else more."

Pat Porter, the 23-year-old TAC champion from Alamosa, Colo., is a blazing starter, and at 550 meters he was leading the race. Salazar, wearing black tights against predicted sleet that would never come, began modestly, unworried about catching up. At the end of the first 2,000-meter lap—there would be six—Porter and teammate Thom Hunt were in the front rank, another U.S. runner, Ed Eyestone, was 21st and Salazar 25th. Farther back came Americans Craig Virgin and Mark Anderson. Yifter and Kadir were out of it, but an unknown Ethiopian ran near the front. This was Bekele Debele, a 20-year-old army private with a crescent scar under his right eye. "We have a special Ethiopian sport," he would say later. "We get on horses with spears and shields and fight. The scar is from when I fell off my horse four years ago." Debele had been only 10th in the World

Cross-Country junior race in 1982 but had won the San Blas half-marathon in Puerto Rico last month. He felt fine. "In the middle of the race I wanted to run away," he said, "but I thought if I try, they might stay with me. So I changed my mind and waited."

That was acceptable to Salazar, who had joined the leading cluster. At the halfway mark, he and Porter were abreast in the lead. "I felt great on the flat," said Salazar, "but on the hills and mud it was tough. The harder I tried, the more I seemed to struggle, like on a sand dune, or in a bad dream."

So Salazar waited, too. "I've been running great. I got cocky. I wanted for the kick," he said.

With no one seriously trying to break away, the race remained a nearly unbroken torrent of runners. With a lap to go, Robert de Castella of Australia was leading and seemed to be paying particular attention to Salazar. These two fastest-ever marathoners will race that distance against one another for the first time on April 9 in Rotterdam. There, they will likely be alone at the end. Here, they were surrounded. Carlos Lopes of Portugal, the 1976 Olympic 10,000-meter silver medalist, was there, as was Muve Some of Kenya. And Porter, the great revelation of the race, was hanging close.

Porter had miscounted laps. When he expected to turn for the finish, he saw officials ringing the bell for another 2,000-meter circuit. Somehow he steered himself to keep on. He was in seventh, and he would finish ninth, his remarkably long stride strong to the finish.

Salazar kept waiting. "I thought we had about 800 to go, and I was getting ready, when someone hollered we only had 400 to go, and the other three [Lopes, Some and Debele] took off," said Salazar. "I was shocked because they seemed tired than I was." Nonetheless, he put his head down and went after them, and churned past with 100 meters to go. "I thought I'd won it. I thought they'd used their kicks. Then we hit more soft ground. And they had one more spurt."

In the stretch, first Debele shot past, then Lopes and Some, a 22-year-old soldier with only two years of running behind him. With 25 meters to go, it seemed anyone's race. Debele, Lopes and Some all were given the same time of 36:52, but Debele was the winner, Lopes held off Some for second, and Salazar was fourth in 36:53. De Castella was sixth, seven seconds back. Ethiopia's depth told in the team race—Kedir came back to rally his men to six places in the top 21—and they won with 104 points.

Behind Salazar and Porter, Hunt was 28th ("a long struggle"). Eyestone 30th, Virgin 42nd and Anderson 57th, and their 170 points took second, ahead of Kenya's 191, equalling the best placing an American team had ever achieved.

"I screwed up by not pushing the pace," said Salazar, but even in his chagrin he found a positive note. "It was good for me, if only for showing me how I was overconfident. I normally wouldn't think I could outkick those guys. Now I'm hungry. Now I'm down to earth."

Rotterdam must have been on his mind then, with its fast course and the challenge of de Castella. This had been a grand race, and in a world where victories last only a day, it had sown the seeds of an even grander one. **END**

Lopes, Debele, Salazar and Some were packed in tight at the tape.

COUNTRY CHAMPION 10,000-METER





Consumed with shame at losing to champ Larry Holmes, Gerry Cooney dropped out. Now he's boxing again

by **WILLIAM NACK**

Gerry Cooney had finally had it. The months of drift and chaos were nearing an end. Slightly wild-eyed, he turned his back to the fire and hollered across the room. "I don't care what you say about me anymore! I don't care what you write about me anymore. I don't care! This is my life. I can't have anybody messing with my life. I just want to be Gerry Cooney, doing what I want to do. I want to be what I am. A fighter. Do you understand that?"

It was far into a cold February night, and Cooney was in the living room of his new home in Huntington, Long Island. Now the house was almost empty. For

three nights, family and strangers had been coming and going, and Cooney had been the obliging host. "Would you like a drink?" the fighter would say. "There's wine in the fridge and vodka or rum on the counter. Help yourself. Where do you want to eat tonight? You like Italian? You like Chinese?"

He had also been the entertainer, reciting dozens of lines from movies he had been showing for weeks, over and over, on his Betamax. He was Rodney Dangerfield in *Caddyshack*, an inebriated Dudley Moore taking a hooker out to dinner in *Arthur*. Clint Eastwood in *Dirty Harry*, holding an armed killer at bay with

PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHN IACONO



Starting Up The Long Road Back

To get in shape, Cooney legs it up Tramway Road above his Palm Springs training camp.

self-abasement. He had ballooned to 246 pounds, 20 more than his fighting weight, but the trip to Sundance would be for more than melting the fat away; it would be a last chance. There was a hint of panic in Cooney's voice that night on Long Island as he said, "I have no time to play no more. I have no more time! No more. I'm not 21 anymore. I'm 26! Get out! Leave me alone! I have no more time. I'm not Ali and I'm not Joe Frazier. Do you understand that?"

He didn't wait for a reply. "I ain't coming back for no glory. This is my last hurrah. This is it! I want to fight Holmes again and win the title and take my family and friends to Europe and have a few fights over there and get out. I don't want [Rinaldo] Snipes and [Michael] Dokes to make money off me. This is it for me! Do you understand now? I ain't got no more time. . . ."

Cooney stood up straight. The light from the fire cast his shadow on the far wall. For the first time since he had cried in the Caesars Palace ring after losing to Holmes, he finally seemed at peace with himself.

A few weeks after the Holmes fight, Cooney telephoned from Long Island to one of his co-managers, Mike Jones, in New York City. When Jones answered, Cooney said, "Michael, hold on a second." He stepped to a window and pushed it open, loudly.

"Mike, I'm going to jump!" Cooney cried.

Alarmed, Jones began pleading with his fighter. "Don't do it, Gerry. Please! Don't do it! Where are you?"

"In my kitchen," Cooney said. "On the ground floor. . . ." Cooney chuckles when he tells that story—he remains an incurable tease—but Jones rolls his eyes when he's reminded of it. It may seem

continued

his .44 magnum, Bill Murray in *Stripes* and Charles Bronson doing his macho number in *Death Wish*.

And he was John Lennon singing. Ever since WBC heavyweight champion Larry Holmes stopped Cooney in the 13th round of their title fight in Las Vegas last June 11, Cooney had listened endlessly to *Watching the Wheels*, Lennon's song about his dropout from the entertainment world. It sustained Cooney through his dropout from boxing. "Listen to this," he said one day, springing to his feet. "This was just like me the last nine months, right down to the end." He sang along:

*I'm just sittin' here watchin' the
wheels go round and round
I really love to watch them roll
No longer riding on the merry-
go-round
I just had to let it go. . . .*

But now the wheels had stopped for Cooney. In three days he would be leaving Long Island and its intrusions, and flying to Palm Springs, Calif. to begin training at the posh Sundance Resort at the foot of the San Jacinto Mountains. He'd been consumed with guilt for losing the Holmes fight, and his life since then had been an exercise in seclusion and

absurd now, but there was a time when some people close to Cooney genuinely feared for his well-being, feared even that he might consider self-destruction—a thought, he says, that never occurred to him.

"I went down deep," Cooney says now, holding a palm at eye level and then dropping it sharply. "I mean a deep, deep depression I went right off the end."

Why he went into such a decline remains puzzling. His record going into the Holmes fight was 25-0, and though he hadn't fought since destroying Ken Norton in 54 seconds 13 months earlier, he was only an 8-5 underdog against the undefeated champion. He feels, in retrospect, that he could have won. "I held back, wondering if I could go the distance," he says, "and I didn't fight my fight; I didn't follow up when I had him hurt and backing up." But he isn't the first man to lose a fight he felt he could have won, and he won't be the last.

For Cooney, going "right off the end" meant not stepping inside a gym again until the last week in October, and then only working out halfheartedly. He didn't return in earnest until January

and didn't begin training day in and day out until he arrived in Palm Springs on Feb. 27. But now he's thinking positively about the future. Last week Jones and Cooney's other co-manager, Dennis Rappaport, were working on a deal that would put him back in the ring in May.

But there were times when it seemed that Cooney would never fight again. "I can't say it didn't pass through my mind," he says. "I was very down on myself. It took me a while to understand what happened to me. I wanted to sort things out, to understand why I lost. I could have come back to fight right away, but it would have been for all the wrong reasons, like to make money. I wanted to wait until I knew I wanted to come back. Not just to make money. Not because of pressures. I felt I would fight again, but not until my head was right."

Cooney says he made \$9 million fighting Holmes, of which Rappaport and Jones took \$3 million—a standard one-third cut—and trainer Victor Valie about \$600,000. That left Cooney with about \$5.4 million before taxes.

"I could have had five fights since Holmes and made tons of money," he

says, "but I didn't. I could have done well, but it wouldn't have been from my heart. It wouldn't have been me, really. So I just had to take time. Before I jumped into anything—before I said I wanted to go back or didn't want to go back—I wanted to sit down and take the puzzle and put it together and say, 'Now I'm positive I want to do this. Now I'm positive I can do this.'"

For months after his fight with Holmes, wherever Cooney went people asked him why he wasn't in training. "I got depressed, and it just got worse and worse," he says. "I'd go out at night, and people would bother me and I'd leave. I felt like bringing a tape recorder to answer for me."

Cooney stopped doing his roadwork in the morning. He received telephone messages but refused to return the calls. Jones remembers a recording Cooney was using on his phone answering machine: "Hi, this is Gerry Cooney. I'm not home at the moment, and Hillie don't pick up the phone no more," referring to Hillie Cohen, who was his roommate before a recent falling-out.

A few weeks after the Holmes fight, Jones started leaving messages of increasing urgency, from "Gerry, this is Mike, call me" to "Gerry, this is Mike, please call me" to "Gerry, please call me, it's important." For weeks there was nothing but silence.

"I'd try to call three or four days in a row," Jones says. "I knew he was depressed, and I wanted to sit down with him, one on one, and talk to him. I'd leave a message with his mother, or with his brothers, Michael and Steve, but he never got back to me."

Cooney felt pressure everywhere, even at his mother's house in Huntington, where he was raised. Eileen Cooney was taking many calls for him and, because of a television commercial that she had done with Gerry, was receiving fan mail herself. He used to go there to get away, but there was no getting away. "My mother used to say, 'You have to do this. You have to do that. This one called. Call here. Call there.'"

Finally, Cooney said, "Mom, I come to your house to see you and relax. I don't want to hear this now. I can't take it no more."

When Cooney visited his mother he sat down and stared at the television set. "He'd be very quiet," Eileen says. "I nev-

continued



Failing to gain a 1982 triumph—over Holmes—Cooney settled for this 1947 Triumph.



Finishing third in the Baja 1000 was terrific. The way we did it was unbelievable.

The Baja.

A strip of land below the California-Mexico border. It can go from an elevation of 6,000 feet all the way down to sea level at the drop of a sombrero. Its terrain is made up of jagged rocks, sand washes, a dry lake bed, tide pools, mud, silt beds, you name it. If you're a snake or a lizard, it's paradise. If you're an automobile or truck, it's hell.

Yet it was on this God-forsaken strip of land that this year's most newsworthy accomplishment in the world of trucking took place.

The scene—the annual Pernod/Score Baja 1000. The accomplishment—the third place finish in the mini pick-up class of the absolutely unheralded entry of the Isuzu 4 x 4 pick-up. The only diesel entry in the entire race, and the first imported truck to finish the race.

An achievement that becomes somewhat heroic when one considers these facts. The

Baja 1000 is a prestigious race that most truck manufacturers usually enter at substantial cost with crews, drivers and multiple truck entries. The Isuzu 4 x 4 was a single entry, with only its driver and owner, Henry Simpson, his co-driver, John Comacho and a very small crew.

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This is the canvas Mom likes to see Gerry on.

GERRY COONEY *confessed*

or saw him like that." At times, to cheer him, she would try to show him encouraging letters. He didn't want to see them.

Jones gave up trying to reach Cooney by telephone and began driving to Huntington, hoping to catch him at his new pub, Cooney's East Side. When he got lucky and found him there, Cooney would talk about anything but boxing. Jones recalls, anything but his past or future as a fighter.

"Mike, I don't want to talk about it," Cooney would say. Then one day in late July, Cooney hinted to Jones that he was ready to come back again. It wasn't long before Jones and Rappaport, with help from Sam Glass, whose Tiffany Productions had co-promoted the Holmes fight with Don King, lined up a bout with former heavyweight champion John Tate. He had been a spent shell since he'd been knocked face-down cold by Mike Weaver two years before. The fight was on if

Cooney would agree. According to the contract, Jones had two weeks to sign his fighter—"Just in case I couldn't find him," he says.

It took Jones four days. Unable to reach Cooney by phone, Jones drove out to Cooney's East Side, and there Cooney was. "I got a hell of a deal for you," Jones said, pulling the contract out of his pocket. "John Tate. You make over \$1 million." Cooney told Jones he wasn't fighting until he was ready. "And I'm not ready," he said. "Nobody, not you, Dennis, Victor, my mother, my brothers or anyone, can tell me when to fight until I'm ready to fight."

Jones decided to leave Cooney alone. He didn't try to reach him again for months. As summer became fall, no one in Cooney's circle felt more abandoned than Valle. Cooney's father had died in 1976, and Valle had since become a kind of surrogate. Gerry not only didn't visit Valle in Gleason's Gym in Manhattan, where Valle trains his fighters, he didn't call him, either. Valle became impossible to live with. He grew quiet at home, stopped

playing with his grandchildren, snapped at his family and forbade Cooney's name to be mentioned in his presence.

"I saw Gerry on TV today," Victor's wife, Lola, said one day.

He exploded, saying, "Goddammit! I don't want to hear that name mentioned around here anymore."

Deeply hurt, Valle slipped into a depression of his own. He stopped talking to Lola and so disrupted the household that his son, Victor Jr., a boxing trainer himself, appealed to him. "Pop," he said, "you've got to snap out of this. You're making the family miserable."

Lola finally fell ill. "Victor would talk to me very rough, or he wouldn't talk to me at all," she says. "I was very depressed. All I did was sleep. It didn't make any difference to me if I lived or died." In September she began a month-long stay at Gracie Square Hospital in Manhattan, suffering from "severe depression."

Cooney didn't want to face the pres-

sure he knew Valle would bring to bear on him. When he finally screwed up the courage to call Valle one day last fall, Valle told him to either get back to the gym or announce his retirement. "You owe that to the people," Valle said. Cooney told him that he wanted to fight again but didn't want to be pushed.

"Nobody's pushing you," Valle said. "Don't be foolish. Get into that gym. The faster you do it, the better it will be. Get into condition."

Cooney said, "Pop, I'll be there. Give me a few more days."

"He didn't show up for weeks and weeks and weeks," says Valle. "That's when I got mad. I was telling newspapers that he was coming in next week. And then next week—no Gerry. No Gerry."

"He was making me look like a fool. I was very, very hurt because he didn't call me. When he didn't come to the gym, I was very annoyed. It bothered me that a smart kid like that would stay away so many months just because he didn't know how to accept defeat. I have never seen a kid act that way. A man of 26 should have a little more common sense."

"He wished that this had never happened. I told him, 'You cannot bring back the past. You have to learn how to erase it and bury it.' He thought he couldn't lose. . . . He was too sure. The defeat was a terrible thing on his mind. It snapped."

One might have thought, reading the newspaper gossip last summer and fall, that Cooney was doing his training at Studio 54 and Xenon with debutante Cornelia Guest, actress Valerie Perrine and country and western singer Tanya Tucker. In fact, he says, he knew them only in passing and had an affair with none of them.

"Every time I went in to New York, it made the papers," he says. "It was all blown up. I mostly laid low and hung around my own place, because it was the one place I could go where people knew to leave me alone."

He was lost. By October he and Cohen were at each other's throat and Cooney asked him to leave. "We beat up on everybody else until there was nobody left to beat up on," Cohen says. "So we beat up on each other."

In October, CBS boxing commentator Gil Clancy, a former trainer and an old friend of Cooney's, drove out to Hun-

ington to urge him to get back to the gym. Clancy brought his wife, Nancy, to Cooney's East Side for dinner, and he and the fighter rapped for hours. Clancy refused to go until Cooney had promised him he would return. "I'm not leaving here till you tell me when you're going back," Clancy said. Cooney agreed to resume training; he talked with Valle and had a workout at Gleason's Gym, but then he had second thoughts. "I didn't know if I was supposed to go back," he says, "so I took off a week. And came back again. Then I fought an exhibition in Texas. But I didn't know if I was ready for all the questions, every day 15,000 questions. Mike and Dennis were trying to make something, and I'd mess it up."

Cooney couldn't even keep an appointment with a psychiatrist. During the fall, Cooney and Rappaport had begun meeting, and Rappaport sensed Cooney needed professional help. "He was in chaos; he felt his world was crumbling," Rappaport says. "He was extremely tough on himself, putting himself through all sorts of guilt trips. He blamed himself for everything that happened." Rappaport suggested that he see a psychiatrist; Cooney said O.K.

Rappaport consulted the American Psychiatric Association in search of an older man—"I wanted a father-type figure"—for Cooney. He ended up with 10 names, which he gradually reduced to one. On the appointed day, Cooney balked out. Rappaport fumed. "He got cold feet," he says.

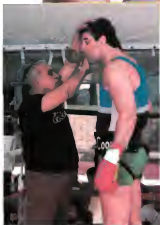
"I said, 'Hey, I don't need this shrink,'" Cooney says. "By then I knew I was going to beat it, but I knew it was going to take some time."

His younger brother, Steve, had begun to see a difference around Christmas-time. "He was like a different person," Steve says. "You could see it just in the way he carried himself."

"Maybe things adjusted in my head," Cooney says. "I don't know. I thought about it an awful lot. One day it just hit



Cooney is now tough on sparring partners instead of on trainer Valle, who took some crushing psychological blows from Gerry.



me and then I started feeling good."

Valle flew with Cooney to Sundance, along with Rappaport and Jones, and George Munch, a friend Cooney has known since grade school. Cooney and Munch share a condo at Sundance with Richie Barathy, an instructor in karate and a black belt in seven styles of martial art. Barathy claims the world record for breaking slabs of granite with a single karate chop—six slabs, each 1½ inches thick, set 1½ inches apart. He'd worked for Cooney as a bodyguard in Las Vegas.

In the months when Cooney was avoiding Valle, he began working out—lifting weights but not sparring or even hitting the bag—with Barathy at Rab's.

Barathy's gym in Huntington, Barathy is supervising a weight-training program designed in part to increase the strength and speed of Cooney's punches. "I figure that his punches will increase by 20 mph in each hand," Barathy says. "You can't imagine what it will do for him. Whether he's feinting, picking off punches or throwing hand weapons, it will all be done faster and more powerfully."

Where the last nine months have left Cooney, of course, is a question that not even he can answer yet. He had puttered around Gleason's for a few weeks, and had caught a bad cold, which was not helped by heavy rains the first few days in Palm Springs. But he has since been beating up on his sparring partners—he dropped seven out of seven the first three days—like the ferocious gym fighter of old. Valle is withholding judgment: "He was too long away from boxing. What he has done to himself remains to be seen."

But at least Cooney is talking more rationally about the Holmes fight. "I got so much experience out of that," he says. "If you go through the rest of your life chasing the past, you'll never get anywhere. Hey, I took some time off to think. It's one of the things I learned. It was hard."

Most important, he is back because he wants to be, and on his own terms. "I feel I got new blood," Cooney says. "I'm excited about coming back. I feel good about this again. I feel hungry again. I want to win the title. I lost only one fight. I don't want to lose no more."

END

The entertainment begins at about 11:15 p.m., a few minutes after the bus carrying Club de Hockey Junior de Verdun pulls out of a McDonald's parking lot in Shawinigan, Quebec. The team is beginning the two-hour drive back to suburban Montreal after a 3-1 win over Les Cataractes de Shawinigan. Cheers of anticipation greet the "backup band" as Verdun players Jacques Sylvestre (playing an imaginary guitar), Jean-Maurice Cool (imaginary trumpet) and Steve Woodburn (imaginary drums) start strutting up the aisle. They are followed by Jean Bourgeois, who is already stripping off his jacket. At the front of the bus, Sylvestre, Cool and Woodburn turn to face their increasingly appreciative audience. Bourgeois, still facing forward, pulls down his tie, drapes a wool scarf around his neck, unbuttons his white shirt to the navel and wharls to confront his now howling teammates.

"Now since my baby left me
I've found a new place to dwell."

Bourgeois hums and grinds Elvis-style down the aisle of the fast-moving bus, singing parts of *Heartbreak Hotel*, *Hound Dog* and *Don't Be Cruel*. His teammates laugh and yell at him. Nearly all their remarks are in French. In the sixth row, aisle seat, right side of the bus, sits Verdun's star center and leading scorer, Pat LaFontaine, who's smiling and apparently enjoying the show. He's not shouting, partly because that's not his nature, but mostly because he doesn't know a lot of French.

Despite the Gallie ring to his name, LaFontaine is not a French-Canadian but an American. He's from Waterford Township, Mich., a town about an hour's drive north of Detroit. Only three Americans play in the 11-team Quebec Major Junior Hockey League, and of the 800 players in Canada's Tier One Junior A leagues, which consist of the QMJHL, the Ontario Hockey League and the Western Hockey League, just 32 are

A New Departure Toward Arrival

The top pick in the NHL draft may be Pat LaFontaine, a U.S. kid who said goodbye to family and friends to play against the best in Canada

by JACK FALLA

U.S.-born. Of the comparatively few 16- to 19-year-old players in the U.S. capable of holding their own in Junior A, the premier proving ground for the NHL, most aren't willing to give up high school and college hockey, not to mention family and friends. Like their Canadian counterparts, those who do travel north of the border to play have one goal: to be drafted by an NHL team.

In LaFontaine's case, the question is not whether he'll be drafted, but how high. There's a strong possibility that he will make hockey history in June by becoming the first U.S.-born player to be picked No. 1. To date, the U.S. players selected highest have been Washington Capitals center Bobby Carpenter of Peabody, Mass., who was the third choice in 1981, and Buffalo Sabres defenseman Phil Housley of South St. Paul, Minn., who was picked sixth last year. If LaFontaine doesn't go first, another U.S. player, Brian Lawton of Cumberland, R.I., a 17-year-old center who recently led his Mt. St. Charles Academy team to its sixth straight state Metro A championship,





could be No. 1. But while Carpenter, Housley and Lawton stayed home and developed their considerable talents in excellent New England and Minnesota schoolboy leagues, LaFontaine, who attended Waterford Kettering High, which doesn't have a hockey team, chose a different—and far more demanding—route to the NHL.

At the front of the team bus, Bourgeois' act dissolves into general chaos when an assistant trainer jumps up, tears off the Elvis scarf, plants a kiss on Bourgeois' cheek and feigns a swoon back into his chair. "You spend a lot of time on a bus in Junior A hockey," says LaFontaine. "You have to find ways to stay amused."

The two- to five-hour bus trips aren't the only burdens of life in the QMJHL. The 70-game regular-season schedule runs from September into March and is followed by postseason play that can extend through May. There is either a game or a practice every day and, because most of the players are completing high school or starting college, they must find ways to reconcile their academic and hockey schedules. That can test a youngster's willpower on those mornings when the bus rolls in at 3 a.m. and classes start at eight. A Junior A player usually must also adjust to living as a boarder with a family in the city where his team is based. For this and other hardships the player receives a \$35-a-week stipend, out of which fines may be deducted for infractions of team rules. The final touch of professional realism is that a player can be traded.

It's after 1:30 when the bus pulls up to the Verdun Auditorium and LaFontaine and his teammates lug their equipment bags into the locker room and head home. In LaFontaine's case, that's a brick triplex, set among scores of similar triplexes, at 6490 Champlain Boulevard. The house belongs to a retired butcher,

continued

In 70 regular-season games, LaFontaine had a league-high 104 goals, 130 assists.



PAT LAFONTAINE *continued*

Yvon Boyer, and his wife, Gisele, whose children have grown up and moved away. The Boyers "have been like another set of parents to me," says LaFontaine, who has his own key, his own room and kitchen privileges for snacks. Gisele takes care of meals. Still, the rather crowded working-class neighborhood is a far cry from the one in which the LaFontaine family's nine-room split-level ranch-style house sits on the shores of Michigan's Williams Lake.

Earlier in the season, LaFontaine had to worry about getting up for school on mornings following games. But after he finished his high school graduation requirements at Verdun Catholic, where courses are taught in English, and enrolled in Dawson College in Montreal, a mudwinter teachers' strike cost LaFontaine about a month of classes. So he quit

LaFontaine boards with the Boyers, who he says are "like another set of parents."

school to concentrate on hockey the rest of the season. This summer he plans to take part in Waterford Kettering graduation ceremonies and enroll at a college in the Detroit area.

By 10 o'clock on the morning after the Shawinigan game, LaFontaine is at the rink, ready to study videotapes of Longueuil, the team Verdun will face at home that night. LaFontaine is a nearly obsessive student of hockey. Because most Verdun practices begin at 5 p.m.—for the convenience of players in school—mornings often find him looking at tapes or making the 10-minute drive to the Montreal Forum. There he scrutinizes Canadian practices as well as the workouts of visiting teams, "mostly looking for new moves from the forwards, things I can try," he says.

A malfunctioning video recorder prevents LaFontaine from viewing the tapes, so at 11 he leaves the rink and walks to his car, a 1982 Chrysler on loan from his mother for the season. Scrawled in the salt and dust on the trunk are a few words. The name of their author is smudged and hard to read. It's either

Natalie or Nathania. However, the rest of the message is clear: "I love Pat," LaFontaine takes it in stride. "Time to get the car washed," he says. "Usually they just leave notes on the windshield."

A few minutes later, LaFontaine drives to a nearby restaurant. As he walks from the parking lot, a truck driver honks his horn and waves. Inside, a cook recognizes him and yells out a greeting. LaFontaine's hockey exploits last fall quickly made him a local celebrity, and as the season wore on he moved closer to national sports stardom.

LaFontaine got one or more points in each of Verdun's first 43 games. The streak broke by three games a 12-year-old QMJHL record for consecutive games with at least one point, held by a player who became a French-Canadian demigod, the Canadiens' Guy Lafleur. After the Jan. 5 game in which LaFontaine surpassed Lafleur's mark with three goals and one assist, he received congratulatory telegrams from Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau and Quebec Premier René Lévesque. When QMJHL regular-season play ended last Friday, LaFontaine had had a point or more in all but one of Verdun's games. He finished with a league-high 104 goals and 130 assists

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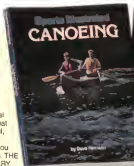


In going to Verdun, LaFontaine left behind his real parents and their lakefront home.

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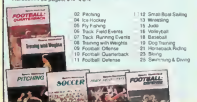
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for 234 points, which made him the third-highest single-season scorer in league history and one of only seven QMJHL players ever to get more than 200 points in a season. His performance also earned him many league scoring records, including most goals, assists and points by a rookie and by a 17-year-old (he didn't turn 18 until Feb. 22), as well as the Verdun assist record, which had been held by the Chicago Black Hawks' brilliant center, Denis Savard.

As LaFontaine rolled up the numbers, he also reeled in the publicity. Toronto's *Globe & Mail*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Detroit News*, the *Detroit Free Press*, *USA Today* and the French-language *Journal de Montreal* have all carried features on the U.S. kid who went to Canada to get drafted. Shortly after breaking Lafleur's record, he appeared as a between-periods guest on *Hockey Night* in Canada, the popular Canadian national telecast of NHL games.

LaFontaine has no regrets about his decision to leave home to play hockey. "There's Junior A hockey in the Detroit area," he says, "but it's not at the same level as Canadian Junior A. If I wanted to progress, I had to come here. My other choice would have been to play college hockey. But that's maybe 30 or 40 games a season. Here I play more than 70. Besides, I've known since I was a kid that I wanted to play pro hockey, so I decided to give three good years to it and see what happens." One thing that has happened is that LaFontaine has forfeited his college eligibility. The NCAA regards Tier One Canadian Junior A players as de facto professionals because they have accepted money, room and board for their services.

"The decision to go to Canada wasn't sudden or dramatic," says LaFontaine's father, John, a Chrysler executive whose eldest son, John Jr., 19, a center-right wing and a possible pro draft pick this year, also left home this season, to play for Nanaimo in the Western Hockey League. "Pat made it easy for us by being so sure about what he wants to do. Then we just took a look at where the pros are coming from. While an increasing number are from American colleges, the vast majority still come from the Canadian junior leagues."

By contrast, Lawton has received far less publicity than LaFontaine while tol-

ing in comparative obscurity for one of the best high school teams in the U.S. "I know there's a better brand of hockey in juniors," says Lawton, "but my parents and I thought it was best if I kept all my options open. I can still play college

A equivalent of the Stanley Cup] I was tempted to go."

Although it would be an overstatement to say that LaFontaine's father is vicariously fulfilling his own admittedly frustrated hockey ambitions through the



What's up, guys? For "Bugs" LaFontaine, it's sudden fame and friendships in Canada.

hockey if I want to." Two weeks ago Lawton signed a letter of intent with Providence College, a perennial hockey power, which will play in the Final Four of the NCAA tournament this weekend. However, if he goes as high in the draft as most hockey people think he will, he'll likely turn pro this year.

Coincidentally, Lawton's Junior A draft rights are owned by Verdun. In January, after his return from the World Junior Championships in Leningrad, Lawton received a phone call from Verdun General Manager Eric Taylor. During the conversation, LaFontaine and his father wandered into Taylor's office, and they asked to speak with Lawton. "Pat didn't try to railroad me or anything," says Lawton, who has never met LaFontaine, "but he made it sound pretty good up there. Mr. LaFontaine just told me that Pat was very happy in Verdun and that the team looked like a strong contender for the Memorial Cup [the Junior

achievements of his sons, clearly he has been the major force in his boys' careers. (The LaFontaines also have a 14-year-old daughter, René, who's an accomplished figure skater.) Their mother, Jay, recalls that "even before we bought skates for the boys, John had a goal in the cellar and he'd take John and Pat down there. They'd play with cut-down sticks and shoot tennis balls."

In 1972, when John Sr.'s job sent the family from St. Louis to Detroit, he took advantage of his new home's lakefront location by constructing a rink when the water froze. "It was about two-thirds regulation size," he says. "We built up snow for boards and had a couple of regulation-size goals. At night I'd go out with a hose and an electric pump, chop through the ice and pump up lake water to resurface the rink." He also installed eight spotlights so his boys and their friends could play at night.

Until this year, John Sr. was the head

continued

or assistant coach of every team Pat played on, including the superb Computware Midgets, a team for 15- and 16-year-olds sponsored by a Detroit-area computer software company. Last season Computware went 88-2 behind Pat's 175 goals and 149 assists. John Sr. also played a major role in Pat's selection of Verdun over Belleville, an Ontario Hockey League team owned in part by Wayne Gretzky, which also drafted him. Last summer Gretzky invited Pat to play golf in Toronto, and during the round The Great One tried to persuade him to sign with Belleville. "I heard him tell his girl friend, 'We have to get this kid,'" says Pat. But the LaFontaines decided on Verdun partly because travel is less grueling in the QMJHL than in the OHL and partly because of the style of play there. The QMJHL is known as a scorer's league, and besides Lafleur it boasts such alumni as Savard, Mike Bossy, Dale Hawerchuk and Pierre Larocque.

Above all else, LaFontaine is a goal scorer. Consider a Feb. 25 Verdun defeat of the Quebec Remparts, during which LaFontaine tied his season high of eight points in a game with four goals and four assists. Three of the goals were sheer artistry. On one he used his right glove to knock down a flap pass from linemate Gérard Gallant and direct the puck onto his stick blade. As he was gathering in the puck, he cut left-to-right across the slot and then shot back across the grain to catch the lower left-hand corner of the net. On another goal, with a Remparts defenseman draped all over him, LaFontaine spun clockwise away from the net, shielding the puck with his body. Using the defenseman as a screen, he fired a 20-foot backhand shot (a good backhand shot is rare even in the NHL) a foot off the ice into the left side of the net. Thirty-seven seconds later he scored again after passing between his legs to



If LaFontaine isn't drafted No. 1, Lawton, who chose to stay in the U.S., may well be.

Gallant and then waiting at the edge of the crease to sweep Gallant's return pass into a virtually empty net.

After leaving the Verdun restaurant, LaFontaine returns to the Boyers' house, where he awaits the arrival of a photographer. LaFontaine sits at the kitchen table while Gisele translates a French-language

newspaper account of the previous night's game. Though LaFontaine has two dresser drawers filled with newsclips about him, he can make out only about half of what's contained in them. Twice during Gisele's translation, LaFontaine interrupts her to say something to Yvon, who is trimming meat at the kitchen counter. After the third interruption Gisele stops reading to glare in mock anger over the top of the newspaper.

"She's going to kill me," says LaFontaine with a laugh. He immediately pulls himself into a posture of rapt attention and falls silent until Gisele has finished reading the article. Yvon is smiling. There appears to be a bond of genuine affection between the couple and their son-for-a-season. "I think he's homesick sometimes," says Gisele. "It's natural that he misses his friends and his family. But I will be lonely when he goes."

On Pat's birthday in February, the Boyers threw a surprise party for him, to which they invited a number of his teammates. The guests presented him with a stuffed Bugs Bunny doll dressed in a replica of the Verdun team jersey, complete with LaFontaine's number, 16.



Lawton finished the year with 36 goals and 42 assists in 27 games.

and his name across the back. "They sometimes call me Bugs because I'm always saying, 'What's up, guys?'" says LaFontaine, who put the stuffed animal on his bedside table along with 10 pucks various youth hockey teams have given him for participating in ceremonial face-offs as a celebrity guest at games. "He says yes to anybody who asks him to do anything," says Yvon. "He will have to learn to say no sometime."

LaFontaine is indeed relentlessly agreeable, and of such even disposition that his coach, Pierre Cremer, once said, "He was always so calm I thought he had no blood. Then, the night his scoring streak ended, I saw him cry. I knew then he had blood."

What blood he has, he plans to keep. "I've never had a fight in my entire hockey career," says the 5' 10", 175-pound LaFontaine, who had only 10 penalty minutes this season. "If I go to the NHL and someone challenges me, I won't back down, but fighting isn't part of my game. Look at Gretzky and Bossy. They don't have to fight."

No, but a player of LaFontaine's abilities must have the goons kept off his back, which is one reason that Verduin traded for Gallant in December. Gallant is what sportswriter Marc Lachapelle, who has covered Junior A hockey for 12 years for the *Journal de Montreal*, calls "a player of respect who creates an area of immunity around Pat." Tactfully put. At 18, LaFontaine already has his first bodyguard.

"When I came here no one told me I was supposed to take care of Pat," says Gallant, "but I am not stupid. I am not going to let anyone get away with anything if I'm on the ice."

Lachapelle rates LaFontaine as one of the finest Junior A players that he has ever seen—right up with Bossy, Savard and Boston Bruins Defenseman Ray Bourque. Says Winnipeg Jets General Manager John Ferguson, a former Canadian tough guy whose respect for LaFontaine is in no way diminished by the youngster's clean style. "He's a natural scorer. Around the net he's got the quickest hands I've ever seen. I'll tell you how fast his hands are. The last time I was in Montreal I went into a video arcade near the Forum, and three of the games were flashing Pat LaFontaine's name as the high scorer."

It's an hour before game time at the Verdun Auditorium. In the lobby a concessionaire stands behind a table piled with souvenirs that include pucks with LaFontaine's name and face stamped on them and lapel buttons with his picture. "They sell like hot cakes," says the concessionaire as he works a machine that stamps yet another LaFontaine photograph onto yet another button.

Upstairs in the press box are scouts from the Minnesota North Stars and the New York Islanders who have come to watch LaFontaine. These two teams are represented because each has an excellent chance of winding up with the first pick in the draft. The Islanders hold the New Jersey Devils' No. 1 choice, and the North Stars have the Pittsburgh Penguins' top choice. Either New Jersey, Pittsburgh or the Hartford Whalers, who have retained their first selection, will finish with the NHL's worst record and thus get first crack at LaFontaine.

If the team that drafts LaFontaine wants to move him into the lineup immediately, LaFontaine says, "I'd probably go. But if it's possible, I'd like to play in the Olympics." If he's drafted by either Minnesota or the Islanders, he might well end up representing the U.S. in the 1984 Games. North Stars General Manager Lou Nanne has said he "would be agreeable" to letting any eligible player try out for the Olympics before turning pro, and the Islanders usually leave their draft picks in junior hockey for a while.

But the Olympics are nearly a year down the road. On this night, LaFontaine scores two goals, including a short-handed one from behind the net, banking the puck off the goalie's skate. In the dressing room afterward, he is filmed and interviewed by a television crew from the Detroit CBS affiliate, photographed by a magazine and questioned by a gaggle of local sportswriters. It's nearly 45 minutes after the game when LaFontaine leaves the dressing room, only to confront a line of autograph seekers extended like a gauntlet from the dressing-room exit to the front door of the rink. A little boy proffers a pen and program.

"Hey, what's up, buddy?" says LaFontaine as he signs his name.

"No English," says the boy to the American hockey star who is signing his way toward the front door and to stardom beyond.

END

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The photo ran on page three of the Sept. 4, 1979 *National Enquirer*, right below a story bearing the headline THE VILLAGE WHERE 38 GIRLS TURNED INTO BOYS. The picture showed Southern Methodist swimmer Steve Lundquist diving off the blocks in the 100-meter breaststroke finals of the Pan Am Games in San Juan, Puerto Rico. "Everybody was making a stink about his start because no one had ever done it that way before," recalls Bob Lundquist, Steve's father. In the picture, Steve is virtually in the pike position—bent sharply forward at the waist, arms and legs extended—and is much higher and farther out over the water than the seven other finalists, who hover low and flat. DIVER (sic) REALLY GOT HIS BACK UP, the headline next to the photo read. "His rear end was up," corrects Bob Lundquist.

The pike start, which Lundquist developed during years of age-group swimming in Jonesboro, Ga., takes him much

Leapin' Lizards, It's Lunk

Steve (Lunk) Lundquist, collector of beasts, is a fearsome critter himself when he's doing the breaststroke

by CRAIG NEFF

deeper underwater—perhaps as many as four feet in deep-water pools—than the standard start. By the time his head popped to the surface in that Pan Am race, he led by two feet. He won by five. Subsequently, Lundquist won gold medals in the 200 breast and 400 medley relay, using the same start. He has used it to similar effect ever since.

Now, an unconventional start may

seem to be tame stuff for a tabloid. Enquiring readers might have preferred Lundquist's bizarre-but-true animal stories—SNAKE-BIT RECORD-SETTER SAYS FANGS A LOT! I BUILT MY MOUSE A CONDO! HEY THERE, GORILLAS! GORILLAS!—or gossip about him as swimming's No. 1 sex symbol and hell raider. But the start is important, because it helps explain why Lunk, as the 6' 2", 186-pound Lundquist is known, now an SMU senior, is the world's best breaststroker.

Starts, of course, aren't the only reason for his success. "Steve has great walls," says Don Gambrell of the University of Alabama, the 1984 U.S. Olympic swim coach, using swimming jargon to describe a swimmer who's expert at making turns. Lunk's turns are unequaled, he's so muscular that he drives off pool walls much more powerfully than his rivals. "You can go half the length of a pool underwater on a good breaststroke turn," says Lundquist. "That's where you pick up yards." Not surprisingly, Lunk is especially tough in short-course pools, 25 meters or yards rather than 50, in which the turns come twice as often.

Lundquist's totally flat feet probably help, too, in lending thrust to his kicking. "They really do a job on shoes, though," he says, pointing to the tattered Top-Siders that flop like sandals on his feet. "My arches," he says, "arch outward." But that's not Lunk's most exceptional feature.

"He has spizzerinctum," says Tennessee Coach Ray Busvard.

Spiz-who?

"Look it up," says Busvard.

Can do. Spittle spitoon ... Spitz.

"Spitz didn't have it," says Busvard. "He was the most successful swimmer ever, but he didn't have it."

Right. Spitzenburg, spizflute, spiv.... There's no spizzerinctum in Webster's Collegiate.

"Well, I guess it's kind of hard to define. John Naber had it, and so did John Kinsella and David Edgar and Valeri Brumel, the Soviet high jumper. It's rare. It's a burning desire to excel, an ability to push yourself beyond your limits. An athlete with spizzerinctum—it's like he has fire coming out of his eyes."

Lundquist's baby blues were down-



With this photo of his pike start at the '79 Pan Am Games, Lundquist made a tabloid.

right blazing last year, when he twice broke the world record in the 100-meter breaststroke and won the world championship in the same event. He was named Swimmer of the Year by both *Swimming World* magazine and U.S. Swimming, the sport's national governing body. All told, in the breaststroke and his other specialty, the 200 individual medley, he has won nine national and five NCAA titles and has broken world or American records on 11 occasions. "He still holds 37 Georgia age-group marks," says his father, beaming.

As befits one with spizzerinctum, Lundquist thrives on the pressure of major meets and loves those in which team scoring is involved, such as the first annual Dallas Morning News Swimming Classic, held Jan. 28-29 in SMU's Perkins Natatorium. Six of the nation's college powers—SMU, Auburn and the four top finishers in last year's NCAA Championships, UCLA, Texas, Stanford and California—brought eight swimmers apiece to Dallas and gave a preview of what figures to be a wide-open men's 1983 NCAA championship meet, which will be held this week in Indianapolis. "We had this place packed," says SMU Coach George McMillon, gesturing to the 2,800 seats in Perkins, a dreary converted gym

For two days Lundquist had old Perkins whipped up into a frenzied sweatbox. He won four individual events (200-yard IM, 100 butterfly and 100 and 200 breast), swam on SMU's victorious 400 medley relay and led the Mustangs to the team championship. "It was five schools against Lundquist," says Stanford Coach Skip Kenney.

At the Southwest Conference Championships in Austin, Texas three weeks ago, Lunk won the 50, 100 and 200 breaststroke titles, but expended even more energy firing up his teammates. During the 800 free relay, in which Texas led SMU from the start, Lundquist was in constant motion, pacing, jumping madly up and down, screaming, clapping, pounding a fist on a trainer's table. "I can't take this," he shouted at one point. "I'd rather be in the water myself than..." He suddenly saw a Texas swimmer faltering slightly in the water. "Die!" Lundquist shouted, leaping two feet in the air. "Die! Die!" The Longhorns won the relay—and the meet—but Lunk remained his usual positive-thinking self. "This was a big meet," he said. "What we want is the next one. The big meet."

The biggie is, of course, the NCAA's, where Lundquist hopes to lead SMU to

continued

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its first national swimming title. The Mustangs were 10th at last year's meet, even though Lundquist was the championships' top point-scorer with victories in the 100 and 200 breaststrokes and a second-place finish behind UCLA's Bill Barrett in the 200 IM. This year, with Barrett having completed his eligibility, Lundquist should win all three of his events, and SMU, with the addition of outstanding freshmen Rich Saeger (freestyle), Mark Rhodenbaugh (backstroke) and 400 IM world-record holder Ricardo Prado of Brazil, should finish no lower than third. "Man, do I want one of those [NCAA] rings," says Lundquist.

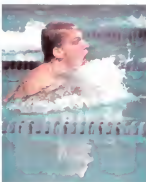
Four years ago Lundquist himself was what every college coach in the country wanted. "He was the kind of swimmer who comes along maybe once in five years," says McMillion. Lundquist was 17 when he broke his first world record, at the 1978 National AAU Long Course championships at The Woodlands, Texas, where he cut nearly a second off the 200-yard IM mark held by Aleksandr Sidorenko of the Soviet Union. At the '79 Short Course Nationals in Los Angeles he had become the first swimmer to break 2:00 in the 200-yard breaststroke. What college coaches went through in hopes of getting him is now swimming legend. "Quite frankly," says Gambri, one of six finalists in the pursuit of Lunk. "I wouldn't want to be involved in another recruiting episode like that one."

The first obstacle was Lundquist's attitude. "I was a cocky snob," he says with embarrassment. "I was good and I knew it. The worst advice I ever got was from a famous swimmer I admired at the time, who told me, 'These schools are going to be begging for you. Milk it for all it's worth.' Now I regret it so much more than I can tell you."

How self-assured was Lundquist? His principal goal as a high school senior was seemingly to be elected King of Jonesboro High, which he eventually was. He hardly saw a swimming pool that year, figuring he didn't need to train, and instead tried out for football, the only sport that really matters in Georgia. A defensive end, he practiced with the starting team during the week but rode the bench on Saturdays. No glory there. Before the season ended, Lundquist confronted the football coach and snapped, "I'm quit-

ting. I'm going back to my swimming."

Unfortunately, Lundquist wouldn't tell McMillion, Gambri, Bussard or the coaches at Arizona State, Auburn and Florida which of their schools he would attend. Often he didn't even answer their phone calls. The anxious coaches waited through the spring of his senior year. And through his graduation. Each school had to leave open one of its precious scholarships in case Lundquist decided to join it. Finally, at the Pan Am Games early in July, Lundquist decided on SMU. "Most of the coaches were true class gentlemen about it."



At the Dallas Swimming Classic, Lunk was 5 for 5.

says Bob Lundquist. "Some weren't."

Lunk was somewhat chastened by two incidents that followed his return from San Juan. At the Long Course Nationals in Fort Lauderdale, his lax training finally caught up with him, and he failed to make the finals of the 100-meter breast. Worse, University of Florida swimmers and their parents—all jilted suitors—cheered resoundingly when Lundquist's failure was announced. That hurt. Of course, they were unaware that on the previous day's drive from Jonesboro, Lundquist and his parents had witnessed a horrifying car crash and that Steve had spent an exhausting four hours helping the injured passengers. "One woman was dead, right there," says Steve's mother, Lois. "It was awful." Steve left the scene shaken. "It made me realize how fast it all can end," he says.

What ultimately changed Lundquist, however, was rooming during his sophomore year with J.D. Browder, now a senior at the University of Houston, a dwarf who's 4'7" tall. "That was the awakening part of my life," Lundquist says. "J.D. taught me what lucky was. He has the greatest, most positive outlook on life—and he's handicapped. That guy's my best friend in the world. Man, he opened my eyes."

Browder wasn't afraid to challenge his roommate at anything, be it boxing or tennis. "Whatever I did, J.D. wanted to do—and do even better. He never ever got discouraged," says Lundquist. And Browder's buoyant spirit rubbed off. Lundquist began going out of his way to sign autographs and chat with young fans. He even approached McMillion one day and asked if he could help out the SMU program by writing letters to potential Mustang recruits. When McMillion said yes, Lundquist wrote to about 50 prospects a year, adding the postscript, "If you ever need somebody to talk to, about anything, please call me."

Getting along in the water was never a problem for Lundquist, who grew up less than 100 feet from the shore of Jonesboro's Lake Sprivy. His father, now the president of Motion Manufacturing, an Atlanta firm that makes special hospital beds, was a high school freestyler, while his mother, a realtor, formerly worked as a lifeguard and YWCA swim instructor. However, they let Steve and their other son, Brad, now 25 and an Army paratrooper living in West Germany, get into swimming on their own. Brad quit, Steve loved it.

Bob and Lois became Steve's support crew. Even though one of Steve's first coaches, Art Winters, left the Forest Park (Ga.) Swim Club, he volunteered his time and traveled the 12 miles to Lake Sprivy each day to train 15-year-old Steve. Winters would ride alongside Steve on the Lundquists' pontoon boat, yelling out instructions and encouragement. And when Winters said he needed a workout pool—neither Jonesboro nor Clayton County had a suitable one—the Lundquists saw to the construction of a six-lane, 25-yard indoor facility 5½ miles from their house. "A man named Al Tallman provided the land and the building," says Bob. "I bought the pumps, laid the



No wonder Lundquist claims that Browder (left) has a positive influence on his life.

concrete, put in the two bathrooms and lighting and so on. I sank probably \$30,000 of my own money in it."

So began the Tallman Swim Team, coached by Winters. "That first summer Steve and three other swimmers went down to a Junior Olympic meet in Memphis," says Bob. "With four swimmers they took home 19 of their region's 24 medals. Wiped 'em out. Broke a lot of meet records."

Strange things came and went in Jonesboro. Like wild animals. When Steve was young, a Lion Country Safari park was in operation next to Lake Spivey, and beasts regularly escaped. Steve and Brad once met a bull moose in the middle of the lake and tried to herd it to shore while riding surfboards. Another time a Barbary ape, variously known as Babbette and Geraldine, found her way into the Lundquists' three-acre backyard and eluded capture there and on a neighbor's three-acre property for 2½ years.

Less entertaining was the snake Steve encountered at The Woodlands in 1978, just days after setting his 200-IM world

record there and one day before he was to leave with the U.S. national team for the world championships in Berlin. He saw it on the sidewalk and, having caught snakes all his life, figured he would pick it up and toss it into the grass. "Instead it picked me up," says Lundquist. The snake bit him on the hand and a numbness quickly spread up his arm. The snake was a deadly copperhead. Lundquist spent the night in a Houston hospital, eventually lost 12 pounds and finished a disappointing fourth in the 200 IM at Berlin.

Of course, Lunk would have been safe if he'd only had Mighty Mouse with him that evening. That is, to feed to the snake. Mighty was a white lab mouse Lundquist rescued from an SMU dorm and moved to his room. There the little critter lived in a miniature condominium designed and built by Lundquist, whose career interests lie in real estate and architecture, and his roommate. ("Oh yes, I've got something small you might like...") Mighty, alas, escaped after one year and the condo was razed.

Some suspect that Lundquist's true career calling is the demolition derby. At age 12 he totaled a Go-kart and as a result had to have damaged cartilage removed from his knee. During his recruiting visit to Southern Methodist he wrecked one swimmer's boat trailer and was a passenger in another's Chevy Blazer when it ran into two trees. "Lunk had to come here," says a former teammate. "He owed us too much money." Since then Lundquist has pulled the front end off an Olds Cutlass, dented the rear end of his own Chevette and sent one motorcycle to the grave.

In an effort to save another friend's cycle, which he lost control of while push-starting it one day in November 1980, Lundquist brought it down on top of his right shoulder. "I did \$50 worth of damage to the bike and incalculable damage to my shoulder," he says. Lunk was limited to kicking work for three months.

Needless to say, McMillion has occasionally been upset by Lundquist's outside pursuits—among them his passion, water skiing—but McMillion knows that it would be fruitless to try to stop Lunk. As he has said, "You just can't put limits like that on Steve."

Lundquist has tried this year to limit his social life somewhat by staying home more often and changing his phone number—his female admirers are legion—but there's still no doubt around Dallas that he's a night person. "They say there are more bars on Greenville Avenue than in the entire state of Georgia," says Lundquist. He's been known to crawl into bed an hour or two before sunrise and still make it to his 6 a.m. workout. Now that's spizziercunct.

But Steve has mellowed some. Recently, on the back of a swimming program, he spotted a McDonald's ad that read: "You've trained four hours a day, seven days a week for six months to cut 0.3 off your best time. Was it worth it?"

"It made you think," says Lundquist. "Was it worth it? Then you realize what swimming has done for you—in meeting people and growing up and going to places you otherwise would never see—and you say, hey, I'm lucky to be competing."

"We all feel lucky," says Stanford's Skip Kenney. "Lucky that Steve is finally a senior."

Profit: banned in Boston

by Ralph Wiley

The USFL Breakers are winners at tiny Nickerson Field, losers at the bank

There are certainly more profitable places than Boston to foster a new idea like pro football in the spring. So the sage ownership of the USFL Boston Breakers expects to lose money for a while, and so far everything's going according to plan. "No way we could make a profit, even if we filled the place every time we played," said primary owner George Matthews, nodding toward the near sellout crowd of 18,430 paying customers who whooped it up during the Breakers' inaugural home game last Sunday at Boston University's cozy Nickerson Field. "But we're willing to accept the loss."

Matthews spoke not with a whimper but a smile, despite the contrast in attendance with Sunday's New Jersey Generals' home opener at the Meadowlands, where 53,370 showed up—and probably left wondering why. The Tampa Bay Bandits routed the winless Generals 32-9. Boston, meanwhile, played like a feature attraction, beating the Washington Federals 19-16 and losing money while doing it.

Watching the till drain and smiling at the same time takes character, a quality the Breakers seem to have in abundance. "The first two or three times you hear that character stuff, you think bullfeathers," says Boston Placekicker Tim Mazzetti, whose fourth field goal with :27 left won the game, "but then you see the difference. There's none of that NFL negativism. In the NFL, the coach looked away when I missed a kick. Here, the coach [Dick Coughy] says, 'Great kick! You'll get it next time!' Here, they believe, so you have to believe, too."

The birth of the Breakers was bankrolled by individual investors, including Matthews and Randy Vataha, the former Stanford and New England Patriot wide receiver. Matthews consulted Bob Caporale, a sports attorney who had advised

the Hartford Whalers and the WHA and was legal counsel to the firm that constructed Schaefer Stadium, the 60,358-seat home of the Patriots, 26 miles southwest of Boston. Caporale looked at the situation, realized it was hopeless and decided it was irresistible.

"We New Englanders don't spend our money on just anything that comes along," says Caporale, now the Breakers' president. "We knew we'd have problems. We had no doubt."

No doubt at all. The Red Sox are heading north soon. Both the NBA Celtics and the NHL Bruins will make the playoffs. And, of course, there's no arena suitable for spring pro football in Boston proper other than Nickerson Field and Harvard Stadium. Caporale propositioned Harvard, which turned him down flat in November. He was in negotiation with the Patriots on renting Schaefer Stadium but to the Breakers, Nickerson made more sense. As in cents.

The rent was higher at Schaefer, the fan inconvenience greater. The Breakers decided whoever did show up at Nickerson would look less lonely against the smaller backdrop. Plus, a penny saved is

one spent somewhere else. So the Breakers doled out some \$300,000 on improvements on Nickerson, adding more than 4,000 seats to bring the capacity to slightly less than 21,000. "It was important to all of us to be in Boston," says Caporale. "What we would like to see eventually is a modern sports facility built, a domed stadium."

The prospect of small crowds in Boston caused a minor uproar around the league, where the visiting teams share in the gate. And some of the league's other owners may have bitten their tongues after Caporale signed Cincinnati Bengal Tight End Dan Ross on March 3. It's a league tenet not to sign NFL players under contract, which is logical since a franchise like Boston's couldn't last long enough to play the national anthem if a bidding war began.

"But all we said was that we would honor existing NFL contracts," says Caporale. "We signed Dan for next season, after his Bengal contract has expired. It was because of his great character. We knew he would give the Bengals 110 percent even though he would be coming to us next February."

Not shy about spending, the Breakers also signed Linebacker Marcus Marek, a rookie from Ohio State who had two in-



Crump broke loose for 130 of the Breakers' 143 rushing yards and their one touchdown.

terceptions Sunday, and Andy Johnson, an eight-year roster fixture with the Patriots at running back.

Ross is an alumnus of Northeastern University, as is Matthews. A month ago the league talk was that the Breakers were the most likely to secede and that such mom-and-pop ethics could not survive, much less win, in pro football, a real business. Surprise. The Breakers beat Denver 21-7 after losing 21-17 to Tampa Bay on the road the first week.

Boston's success is more the result of hard work than skill. "Often, character will outlast talent," says John Walton, the 35-year-old starting quarterback with an educated arm and a résumé that reads like a Greyhound bus schedule. Walton is 58 of 97 (59%) for 636 yards and three touchdowns this season.

A bad center snap had given Boston the ball on the Washington 35-yard line with :43 left Sunday. Walton had failed to throw a touchdown pass even though he and Running Back Richard Crump—130 yards, 15 carries and one TD on the day—had marched the Breakers between the 10s at will. Now, Walton completed two passes under pressure to set up Mazzetti's game-winning 29-yarder. Then, the Breakers stood and gave the crowd a standing ovation.

On an off day Walton was 21 of 41 for 247 yards, with two interceptions. "He's like a coach out there," said Coury afterward. Indeed. For the past three seasons Walton had coached the football team at his alma mater, Elizabeth City (N.C.) State, amassing a 20-10-1 record. He started his pro playing career with the Los Angeles Rams in 1969, moving on to the Chicago Fire (1974) and San Antonio Wings (75) of the World Football League before joining the Philadelphia Eagles in 1976. He left the Eagles and the NFL in 1979, at 32.

Coury contacted Walton. "He told me if I was happy coaching, he didn't want me to lose my job," says the dour Walton. "Those three years I lost might have been my peak years. I regret losing my job, but I wanted this."

"He's the leader," said Coury after the win over the Federals. "Talk about character. John's the catalyst of that on the field." Then, grabbing a reporter's microphone, he added, "This guy Walton will be traded in 24 hours." After that he and the quarterback had a fine laugh together. Some characters.

END

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The recent success of the New York Knicks can be described in numbers: eight wins in their last nine games through last weekend, 11 out of 13 on the road, 22 out of 27 overall, all reflecting a decidedly bullish trend after the Knicks' dismal first half of the season. Yet for some New York masochists, apparently intent on making a sow's ear out of a silk purse, the Knicks' resurrection from the ashes of December presents an odd problem. "Things were so much easier then," said one fan after a recent 119-97 win over the Atlanta Hawks. "You went to the Garden to boo the Knicks. I'd be going 'Booooo, Hubie Brown,' and the guy behind me would be going 'Booooo Bill Cartwright.' Everybody was united. The Knicks stunk. Now . . ."

The rapid turnaround has astonished and embarrassed all sorts of would-be experts who were ready to write off New York when its record dropped to 14-26 on Jan. 21. Now the Knicks, 36-31 at week's end, have all but clinched a spot in the upcoming playoffs. Even last Saturday's 96-90 loss to the Washington Bullets hardly diminished their status as the hottest item in the league short of Philadelphia, which before Saturday had been the only team to beat the Knicks since the beginning of March. Sandwiched between those two defeats were eight consecutive wins, seven of them against clubs with winning records. The New Yorkers also had six straight victories on the road and since Christmas



Cartwright is no longer called (twice)-Bill.

The Knicks get the knack

After injuries forced a change in style, New York began thinking playoffs

hadn't lost any game in which they had scored 100 or more points. "We're not blowin' any smoke about what we're doing," says Brown, who's in his first season as coach of the Knickerbockers. "It's an old story—good things come to those who work hard."

A few months ago, however, hard work was paying off only in hard knocks. Despite the fresh presence of Brown, a confirmed workaholic who had guided winning teams in Kentucky (ABA) and

Atlanta by emphasizing defense, the Knicks began by making last year's 33-49 performance, worst in the Atlantic Division, look like That Championship Season.

For starters they lost their first seven games. Much of that time was spent playing *Gettin' to Know You*. Only four of 12 Knicks had been with the team in 1981-82. Three of them—Forward Bernard King, acquired in a trade with Golden State, free agent Louis Orr and first-

by Anthony Cotton

round draft choice Trent Tucker—had joined New York after training camp had begun. Like everyone else, the three had difficulty mastering Brown's complicated system, which on defense employs a series of traps and switches that has held opponents to a league-low 97.6 points per game.

On offense, though, Brown's plan for the Knicks appeared to be "Don't shoot." Only seven times in their first 20 games did the Knicks score 100 or more points, which often meant that New York's defense would manage to keep things just close enough for the offense to come up wanting at the end. Ten times the Knicks lost games in which they were ahead or tied entering the final minute of play. Five of those losses came on last-second shots.

"But people didn't want to talk about that," Brown says. "The thing you have to do is stick to what you're doing and not get depressed. I built winners in two places by using this system, and I haven't changed a play. The style has worked in the pros for years. The important thing is to have the players believing in it."

Atrocious record and all, the Knicks somehow hung together and on Jan. 14 faced the Hawks in Atlanta. Two injuries that occurred in that game have ironically provided the two biggest keys to New York's eventual turnaround. At the time, of course, the losses of King, who severely sprained his right ankle and would miss 14 games, and Guard Edmund Sherrod, who was kneed in the groin by the Hawks' Eddie Johnson, seemed a disaster. King, the Knicks' leading scorer in each of the previous 18 games, was as much of an offense as New York could muster, and Sherrod, an untouted playmaker from Virginia Commonwealth, had been one of Brown's favorites from the beginning of the season.

That was partly because Sherrod, not especially quick or overpowering on offense, was at least smart enough to follow the instructions bellowed in no uncertain terms by Brown from the sidelines. "Give the ball to King" was the most frequent command. As a result, the Knicks

continued



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performed like so many programmed home computers out on the floor.

Sherod's injury, which cynics suggest makes Atlanta's Johnson the most valuable Knick, forced Brown to give more playing time to Paul Westphal, who had been in and out of the coach's doghouse. If he didn't actually improvise more, Westphal at least provided a backcourt threat on offense that had been needed even before King was hurt.

Also because of the injuries, other changes had to be made. One was that the Knicks were forced to run plays through more than one or two options—something they have continued to do even after King's return. The second was that new offensive options had to be found. And the third was the development of the Knicks' bench. Led by Guard Rory Sparrow and Forward Sly Williams, the second team plays a quicker, more frenetic game than the starters do and has suddenly become no less than devastating. Last week in four games the New York's Not Ready for Prime Time Players outscored the opposition's subs 171-109.

Cartwright has been the main beneficiary of the search during King's absence for a new offensive mainstay. Before King's injury, the much maligned Mr. Bill had averaged only 12.9 points per game and had inspired, or uninspired, a whole new series of nicknames in the New York press: impossi-Bill, improbabi-Bill, invis-Bill. Since Atlanta, however, the 7' 1" Cartwright has not only been scoring—20.1 points in the last 31 games through Sunday—but also rebounding, blocking shots and mixing it up effectively inside with heavyweights like New Jersey's Darryl Dawkins and Buck Williams and Washington's Jeff Ruland and Rick Mahorn.

Cartwright has taken success in stride. "It's really strange," he says. "Ever since I've been in New York I've either been great or horrible. There's been no middle ground. It appears to me that I'm doing the same things I've always done, it's just that it's a different situation now that we're winning."

"I just think it's been easy to blame me for any underlying reasons why the team has not done well. For example, the big thing was that I had to learn how to block shots. Now, someone like Kareem is considered an intimidator. He blocks two shots a game, I get one point eight; and

he's great and I'm mediocre. It's just how you look at it."

During the Knicks' hot streak, Cartwright has become a power down low on offense, often forcing the opposition's center into early foul trouble with moves that Brown says have elevated Cartwright's good-looking but sometimes infuriating fadeaway jumper to "a third option now."

Unlike Cartwright, Westphal doesn't pretend he's the same player who four seasons ago with Phoenix averaged 24.0 points per game. That earlier version of Westphal would not have been able to function in the team-oriented structure that has triggered the Knicks' success. "When you're younger you tend to worry more about things such as statistics and individual achievements," Westphal says. "Later you tend to see that things like winning and picking up the check on a regular basis are more important." Assistant Coach Mike Fratello adds, "Paul's been a dream to work with all season. Some guys who have been around a number of years wouldn't put out like he has or might have jumped ship when we were going bad, but the entire time he was the one telling everybody else, 'Hey, we're going to be all right.'"

At the start of the season it seemed that Westphal's next check might be coming from his medical insurance office. Hobbled by a stress fracture in his right foot, Westphal had sat out the previous 13 months before joining the Knicks for the final 18 games of last season. After Brown was named coach, speculation was that the two might not get along and that Westphal might be sent packing along with Maurice Lucas and Michael Ray Richardson.

Although Brown has a tendency to roll his eyes and flap his arms at the sight of an errant Westphal pass, there apparently was never any serious problem between the two men. "There was one point in training camp when Westphal

was nursing a bruised thigh and Mike Newlin had a bad back," says a Knick insider. "I was sitting on the bench with the team doctor when Hubie came by and pointed to Newlin [who was later cut] and said, 'Don't worry about him, Doc, but I really need Paul.'"

Never noted for his quickness, Westphal suffered more than a couple of early season defensive embarrassments that led to speculation he might be finished as a player. Says Westphal, "Even I had



King drives the Knick offense, with 22.1 points a game.

started to think that maybe I was getting old." Nevertheless, he has added diversity if not outright improvisation to the Knicks. "I decided that I was going to go out there and try some things, make the pass even if it wasn't exactly what Hubie wanted, I mean, everybody else was hurt so I knew he wasn't going to take me out."

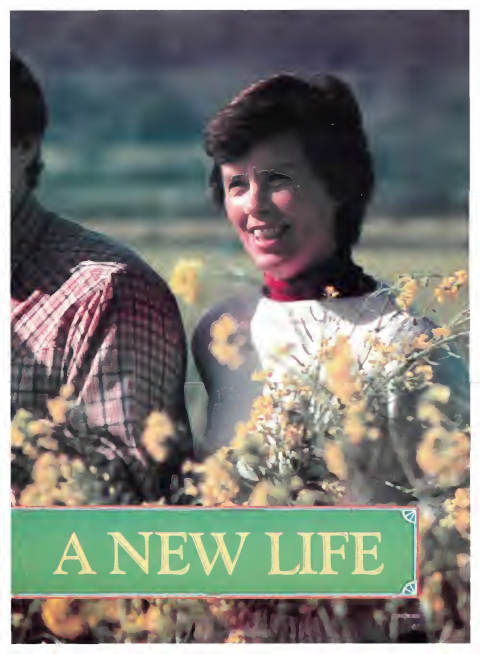
With the playoffs on the horizon, no one is predicting the Knicks can knock off Boston or Philadelphia, but merely sitting up beats what they were doing at the same time last year. Besides, it will give all those New York fans a little more time to decide what to do, now that they can't boo.

1990



Dick Vermell burned himself out as coach of the Eagles. Now he's learning to enjoy living and his family, to smell the flowers

by GARY SMITH

A color photograph of a woman with short, dark, wavy hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a white top with a dark, high collar and a red scarf. She is surrounded by a field of bright yellow wildflowers. To her left, the shoulder and arm of a man wearing a red and white plaid shirt are visible. The background is a soft-focus landscape with green hills under a clear sky.

A NEW LIFE

Every glass of wine ages on its table. Every chair and every Kawasaki dealer in the ballroom is turned toward the podium. At a front table, a small, gray-haired Japanese man, the emperor of Kawasaki, listens with his upper body tilted forward and his eyes narrowed. He has never heard of the speaker before, but in his country they once asked men like this to pilot Zeros down the smokestacks of enemy battleships.

"You got players who won't perform up to their level, don't keep them on your roster!" Dick Vermeil cries. "Get them selling! Give them time to think your way, and at the end of the year, if they don't, then cut 'em or waive 'em!"

His jaw is thrust out challengingly. Everything about him seems to have just burst out of a three-point stance, except his hair, which many years ago agreed to be perfectly in place for the rest of his life. Now the jaw swivels from one side of the hall room to the other.

"There's not a man in this room who works as hard as his dad," Vermeil declares. "Limits are self-imposed—there's no limit to human energy!"

He pauses. This speech was written and memorized back when coaching football was still his life, back when certainty was still his comrade. The jaw loses some of its jut.

"I found my limit," he admits.



Coaching the Eagles gave Vermeil a lot of nervous moments, but also lifted him up to exultant heights on the shoulders of players right out of the coach's mold, like Johnson (45).

He plunges back into the speech, and the fire catches inside him again. "My kids say to me, 'I'd never work as hard as you.' I'll tell you, one day there's going to be a wide-eyed awakening in this country when the young people see the results. There are seven days in a week and 24 hours in a day. If you're working a 40-hour week, you've got a helluva lot of hours at your Kawasaki dealership that you're wasting. I never gave a damn if it took 20 hours a day. I had a sign in our locker room that said, THE BEST WAY TO KILL TIME IS TO WORK AS TO DEATH."

He pauses. He's too honest for this. "Instead of 17 to 19 to 20 hours, I should have moderated it. I should have kept it to 14, I worked time to death . . . and it killed me."

He returns to the script, and the fanaticism returns to his voice. "People in management have got to learn to handle the negatives," he preaches. "People that interpret temporary setbacks as failure allow frustration to blind them."

Pause. "I've been guilty of this. You're



looking at a failure. I licked 90 percent of the problems. The only problem I couldn't lick was myself."

The speech ends a few minutes later, and an ovation erupts. The motorcycle dealers stand in line to meet him. Some will go home talking about the football coach, some will go home talking about the human being.

Vermel puts on his overcoat and steps into winter, still uncertain which he would rather be.

Every morning of his life as a football coach, Dick Vermel would pull a yellow legal notepad from his office desk and make lists. With a first-grade teacher's

neatness, he would write a number, circle it and then print the task to be performed. Exclamation points, as if by a zeal all their own, would spring from his pencil at the end of his sentences.

One of his lists would be for his wife, Carol; he would call her in mid-morning and read it. One would be for his administrative assistant, one for his personnel director. The longest would be for himself. In recent years, before starting his lists, he would listen to the small tape recorder he kept beside his bed to transcribe the ideas that awoke him during the night.

It seemed all his life would be like this. List it. Do it. Check it off. He was one of a generation of sprinters, of young American males shot down a straightaway out of the starting blocks of the Depression, neither their feet nor their eyes ever leaving their lanes. Vermel's sprint would simply be faster and straighter and more dramatic than the others'.

The sprint began on the Caltraga (Calif.) High cinder track, upon which he walked, alongside his football coach, on a spring day during his senior year. The school counselor had glanced at Vermel's grades and recommended a future in his father's garage. Vermel saw himself coaching football. "If I'm going to do it," he vowed to Coach Bill Wood that day, "I'm going to do it right."

It was as if, upon parting with his coach that afternoon, he had sat down and written a list.

1. EARN COLLEGE DIPLOMA AND MASTER'S DEGREE!
2. BECOME HIGH SCHOOL HEAD COACH!

1.1 BECOME HIGH SCHOOL COACH OF THE YEAR!

1.2 WIN LEAGUE TITLE!

He wanted Carol to stay at home with the children, and so when he was finished with his hours of coaching at Hillsdale High in San Mateo, he would change clothes and work some more. At various times he had a job at a food warehouse, dug swimming pools, drove an ice-cream truck, pumped gas, fixed cars under a single hanging light bulb in a silent garage at



Starkly cast lights on burnout for Vermel

midnight. "That man's going places," people would say. They had no idea how fast.

2. BECOME JUNIOR COLLEGE HEAD COACH!

2.1 BECOME JUNIOR COLLEGE COACH OF THE YEAR!

He was 27 and personable and handsome, and the coeds at Napu College, a J.C. in Northern California, wished he would stand still long enough for them to flirt. He couldn't. He was busy bullying a wreck of a football program to a 7-2 season in his first and only year there (1964). His reputation began to spread.

3. BECOME MAJOR COLLEGE ASSISTANT COACH!

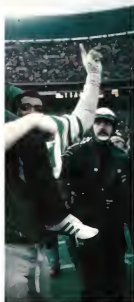
4. BECOME NFL ASSISTANT COACH!

5. BECOME MAJOR COLLEGE HEAD COACH!

5.1 WIN BOWL BOWL!

5.2 BECOME PAC-10 COACH OF THE YEAR!

continued





was great, let's do it again!" Three assistants moved into the local Holiday Inn three nights a week.

The whip came down and left the same quick welt it had everywhere else. The Bruins finished 6-3-2 in Vermeil's first year. On two separate occasions Assistant Coach Lynn Stiles's family awoke to discover him asleep in his car in the driveway. A friend drove Vermeil home each night so he would not be found on the side of the road, dead asleep or just dead.

One day in his second season at UCLA, Vermeil had his staff peering at a film of the previous year's game against Oregon State. Suddenly he punched a button, froze the picture on the screen and blurted, "My God!" The assistants leaned forward, but all they could see was a sideline shot of Vermeil's second-oldest son, David. "God," he said, "has David ever grown a lot in a year?"

"He said it as if the only time he ever saw his kid was on the sideline," recalls former Assistant Coach Carl Peterson, now president and general manager of the USFL's Philadelphia Stars. "Not during the game, when he was there with him, but on film a year later."

Vermeil's oldest son, Rick, who was in high school at the time, was growing his hair to his shoulders, skipping classes and stretching out on the beach. "It's tough

Love and Alice raised Dick in a home once lived in by decorator Robert Louis Stevenson, but the garage is a testament to the work ethic, to a father and a son who refuse to brake on the job.

DICK VERMEIL *continued*

The new head coach of UCLA was 37. Not a wrinkle crossed his clothes or face; even his charisma was crisp. "Men," he told his staff as the first day of practice approached in 1974, "I want to get off to a good start. We'll meet at 6 a.m."

His assistants blinked and nodded. They should have known their lives would change when Vermeil interviewed them between midnight and 3 a.m., after his day as a Ram assistant coach was done. That first work day, they adjourned at 1 a.m.

No one could sprint with Vermeil. He led his assistants onto UCLA's 5½-mile cross-country course and sawing them out for miles, crying at the finish. "That



to walk a middle road with a dad like him," says Rick, now 25 and an athletic-equipment salesman in the Philadelphia area. "I rebelled. I resented him because he could work so hard and was so driven and so successful—the whole ethic and image he portrayed. He'd say he was home at 10; I'd come home at 3. He never pushed me into sports; he just wanted me to be the best I could at whatever I did."

UCLA went 9-2 that second year. Vermeil shocked Woody Hayes and Ohio State 23-10 in the Rose Bowl.

6. BECOME AN NFL HEAD COACH

The phone rang in Vermeil's UCLA office: Mr. Leonard Tose, owner of the Philadelphia Eagles.

"Tell him I'm not interested," Vermeil called to Peterson. Now the sprint was accelerating even faster than Vermeil had charted it; he had planned to win a national championship before moving on to No. 6 on his list.

Peterson remembers the moment. "Dick said to us, 'I can't go now. I want to be an NFL head coach someday, but if I go now, I won't be able to take all of you. I'd need veteran pro coaches up there.' He's absolutely the most loyal man I've ever met. We said, 'My God, Dick, this is financial security. You've got to talk to him.'"

Finally Vermeil agreed to meet Tose on a Friday morning, assuring his assistants beforehand, "I'm not going to take it." He went home that Thursday night and asked his family to vote on whether or not they should move. Carol: No. Rick: No. Dave: No. Nancy: No.

"At noon Friday he called Peterson. 'Well, I took the job,' he said.

Before he could draw in a deep breath, he was standing in front of the Philadelphia media. He told them his emotional approach would not change. "I think people basically are the same from 18 years old to 32," he said. "I think football players play because they like the game, not because they make money."

On July 4, 1976, Vermeil already had his assistants gathered at his first pro training camp. Darkness enveloped Widener College in Chester, Pa., and all was quiet in the dorm room except for the whir of a projector.

Suddenly there was a staccato burst of loud pops and then an explosion. Vermeil bolted to a window and looked out

into the night. "What the hell's going on?" he shouted.

Peterson blinched and said, "I forgot to tell you, Coach. There's a fireworks display at Widener's stadium."

"What the hell for?"

"It's July 4, 1976, Coach, the 200th birthday of our country."

"I don't care whose birthday it is! Go tell 'em to turn it off!"

The team that reported to Widener a week later was fragmented by losing, drug rumors and the '74 NFL players' strike. First- and second-round draft choices for the next three years had been traded away. "It was the most forlorn franchise in football," says San Francisco 49er Coach Bill Walsh, who was then an assistant with the San Diego Chargers.

Vermeil dug in. He wallpapered the locker room with slogans. He ordered the Eagles to keep their helmets on and chin straps buckled during the agony of two-a-day practices. Then he ordered wind sprints. Then he ordered the players to lie down on benches and pump pigeon in puddles of their own sweat.

Doubters were dismissed with shocking abruptness. When starting fullback Mike Hogan was arrested on drug charges, Vermeil cut him without waiting for advice from a judge or jury. A free agent named Mike Siegel was sent packing in mid-practice for missing three blocks; he stripped and dropped his uniform on the ground piece by piece before disappearing from the field wearing only his shorts.

But believers felt an honest arm coil around their backs as they trudged away from a three-hour practice. They shared beef and beer in his house, and tears in his locker room. Vermeil cried when he had to cut them, and sometimes, even when logic demanded it, he refused to. They hated him for his toughness and loved him for his compassion and sincerity, and somehow, in the midst of this emotional jockeying, their Sundays became holy war and they gave up everything for him.

"As athletes," says former Eagle Linebacker Bill Bergey, "we all want to achieve something for ourselves. But



Vermeil turned his attention from Eagles to doves on a recent hunting trip to Mexico he'd put off for years.

with Dick, you go way beyond that. You play for The Cause."

"I always thought he'd have made a great priest," says Monsignor George Sharkey, the team chaplain.

For Vermeil, The Cause began each Monday at 8 a.m. and lasted until one o'clock the next morning, until between 4 and 6 the next, and 2 the next. He would sleep on his office pull-out sofa bed during what remained of those three nights and finally leave his little world at 7:30 p.m. Thursday to go to WCAU-TV to tape his weekly show. "Thank God for the TV show," his assistants would sigh.

Common suffering and Vermeil's loyalty kept the staff from rebelling. But after the 1981 season, Offensive Coordinator Ed Hughes left, telling friends he feared a heart attack.

By Vermeil's second year, the out-manned Eagles were coming within a touchdown of far superior teams. But already Carol Vermeil could see the sprint dehydrating her husband. At last she and Eagle General Manager Jim Murney persuaded him to visit the team psychiatrist. He entered the house a few hours later, his jaw set.

continued

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DICK VERMEIL continued

"Well?" said Carol.

"It would take me a week," said Dick, "to straighten the guy out."

7. BECOME HEAD COACH OF A SUPER BOWL TEAM

By the third year, Vermeil was UPI's NFC Coach of the Year and the Eagles made the playoffs as a wild card team. He buried his head on Tose's shoulder in the locker room and sobbed after the game that sewed up the playoff berth. He hijacked Cornerback Herman Edwards' Super Fly hat at the team party, put it on and danced.

He opened Christmas presents a week late at home so there would be no disturbing his preparation for his first playoff game. His team lost. "If I described what it felt like inside me to lose," he says, "you would write me off as a lunatic. They'd call me one-dimensional, but when I lost, it was the only dimension that people evaluated."

But the Eagles were winners now, and winning only made the tension worse. He set curfews for himself and broke them. He canceled vacations. He gulped coffee for breakfast, ate a Carnation Breakfast Bar for lunch and sometimes had a hoagie, while sitting on the toilet, for dinner. He'd try sleeping pills or hot chocolate or a glass of wine to get to sleep, and still he'd awaken wondering what Shula and Landry and Noll were doing. When he went home, his mind did not, and once dinner ended he'd plug himself into stereo headphones and a Neil Diamond tape and collapse on the couch. He lectured his players that their families were their No. 1 priority.

His sense of responsibility was overwhelming him. He personally redid an entire section of the playbook after an assistant coach drew the circles and squares representing offensive and defensive players freehand, instead of tracing them with a stencil. He accommodated virtually every media and charity request, speaking at up to 50 functions a year. He became frightened—but only for a moment—when long spasms shot through him as he gaped at films. On occasion he seemed to be asking for release from something he could not control. "Sometimes I wish Leonard Tose would fire me," he said.

At Davis, the Raiders' owner, would phone him at 3 a.m. EST, perhaps to es-

calate his fear of not working hard enough. Some coaches and executives squirmed at the word standard Vermeil was setting for the league and some of them resented it. "Vermeil got under my skin by making a big deal of sleeping at the stadium and saying that he worked 16 hours a day," grouched Dallas Cowboy General Manager Tex Schramm. "I know what other coaches do, and they just don't talk about it."

Because Vermeil heaped so much blame on himself for everything that went wrong, criticism was more than he could bear. Once he had to be tackled to prevent him from climbing into the stands after a heckler at the Vet in Philadelphia. On another occasion he said he felt like decking his wife for second-guessing a play call. "He put on this air as this tough little French sonofagun," says Peterson, by that time his personnel director, "but underneath it he was more sensitive than anybody knew. He'd say he never read the papers, Bullcrap. If he didn't read them, he'd say, 'What'd they say, Carl?' For all his success, his confidence level wasn't always strong enough to pull him through."

By his fifth NFL season, 1980, Vermeil was a Super Bowl coach. "That was the best coaching job in the NFL in the last seven years," says Walsh. "There are other great coaches, but they had great organizations around them. Vermeil beat them with his own guts and a few people who followed him. Players of his he'd brag to me about, I wasn't that impressed with. He convinced himself and them they were great. He lived their lives."

The Raiders ran off the Eagles in the '81 Super Bowl 27-10. Instead of receiving praise, Vermeil was criticized for burning out his team with long practices and meetings.

Vermeil returned to Philadelphia, to a quandary. He had dragged 45 over-achievers to Super Bowl status in an emotional sports city ravenous for more. More? Vermeil added an hour to his daily work schedule.

8. BECOME . . ?

I'd love to spend more time with the kids, the husband says. God, they're adults now.

There are so many things we should have talked about all those years, the wife says.

I'd love to go deer hunting in Colorado or Montana. I could sit in a goose pit or a duck blind for hours and freeze and enjoy it.

Sure. And maybe take some time to read. Dick. Maybe play some cards.

I'd love for the two of us to go to a car sometime and drive cross-country. I'd love to go to Italy and see where my great-grandfather came from.

I'd like that. I'd like to have some nice conversations.

I'd like to see our friends. Hell, I don't know half our friends. I'd love to try broadcasting and get the whole family involved so we could work together.

Why can't we, Dick? Why can't we . . . ?

January 1982. A car plowed into Carol Vermeil's Ford on the driver's side, fracturing her right elbow and her pelvic bone and sending 50 stitches' worth of glass into her head, just missing her left eye. "They said she could have easily been killed," Stiles says. "You could see the effect on Dick. For the first time, it really hit him. How important is anything compared to life?"

Vermeil went to San Diego to coach in the Olympia Gold Bowl and had his team of college all-stars hitting so hard during his first day of practice that there was nearly a mutiny. "I'd promised the players a light week, a vacation," says former Kansas City Chief Running Back Mike Garrett, who was player coordinator for the game. "His first day he has them killing each other and they're pulling me aside, saying, 'This guy's crazy. You've got to cut this out or we're leaving.' My teammates called me Mr. Intense at USC, and this guy was two octaves higher than me or anyone I've ever seen. He was personable, but I'd have been terribly afraid to play for him. You couldn't even drink a glass of water slow around him."

April 1982. They thought it was senility. The Vermeils were on a sailboat in the Caribbean, taking the vacation they had fantasized about but postponed for years. They felt terrible. They came home to a diagnosis of hepatitis.

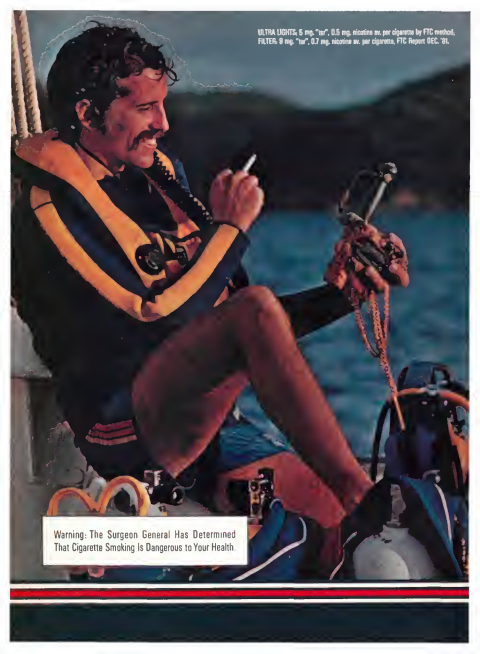
For 45 years Vermeil had made unreasonable requests of his body. A remarkably accommodating machine with a pulse rate of 48, it had occasionally protested but in the end had always submitted. Now a doctor was telling a man who had missed just a half-day of work in his life—for Nancy's birth—to live on his

continued

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A man with a mustache, wearing a black wetsuit with orange and yellow stripes on the sleeves, is sitting on the edge of a boat. He is smiling and looking down at a cigarette in his right hand. In his left hand, he holds a scuba tank with orange and black straps. The background shows a body of water and a hilly coastline under a clear sky. The overall tone is relaxed and adventurous.

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THE TASTE OF SUCCESS.*



DICK VERMEIL, *continued*

back for three weeks. Before a week had gone by, the Eagles' film man was seen staggering out of the office under a huge box of paper work and film, heading for Vermeil's house.

A few weeks later Carol's blood count had improved, and she received permission to break quarantine. Dick's hadn't; he was told to go back to bed. "He called me," recalls Peterson, "and he was angry. He said, 'Goddamn, she beat me getting well.' He was even competing with his wife to get better!"

Draft day came, and Vermeil could be

chosen until the seventh round of the 1977 draft. He agreed to do it the Vermeil way. He became a locker-room leader and weightlifting fool. He became a Pro Bowl starting noseguard three straight years. And "He became tired of waking up with a headache from head-busting every day," says Philadelphia Quarterback Ron Jaworski. "He didn't mind the headaches on Mondays, after a game, but he decided his career wasn't going to last very long having full contact in practice the way we did."

Vermeil took it like a slap from his

methods," says Jaworski. "but when we were celebrating victories on Sunday nights, we didn't complain. I never remember seeing a defense I wasn't completely prepared for. But everybody dreaded Mondays, even after we won."

At the end of July, Vermeil shipped Johnson to Minnesota for a second-round pick. After that he ached every time he walked past the picture in his house of Johnson carrying him off the field after a victory over the Vikings.

September 1982. Gene Upshaw declared that the NFL players' strike was on, and Vermeil finally had to accept the possibility that a football player's primary pursuit might be money. He continued to go through the mechanics of addiction even during the strike, popping game films for placebos. Tose ordered him to go home on Thursdays, but he came back every Monday.

His players? Surely the Eagles would work longer and harder on their own than any NFL team, wouldn't they? Instead, they decided that full-sense workouts would be a signal to the owners that they were chafing to return, and with the headmaster's whip removed, they scattered like schoolchildren at recess. A fearful thought struck Vermeil: His commandments hadn't been internalized.

The weekends came, and in the stillness Vermeil heard himself think another disquieting thought: There was no pressure, no Sunday judgment on the floor of the 70,000-seat cement bowls. And he enjoyed it. Carol and he would drive three and a half hours to a cabin he had recently bought in the mountains of Pennsylvania. She was shocked when he began pulling off to the side every few miles, stepping from behind the wheel and calling, "Look how red the leaves are. Look how yellow."

"I'm saying, 'Right. Dick, this is the East Coast, and they get red and yellow every year,'" Carol remembers. "He'd take five steps and stop and point again. You can't believe how many rolls of film he used up on trees."

At the cabin they would start dinner and a fire, and pour each other wine. And when the sun broke the next day, he'd hike with his Labrador retriever, or if his boys had come along, they'd hop on motorcycles and hit the trails, the boys grinning and gunning ahead to spray rooster tails of dirt back into his face.

In the middle of November the strike

continued



With some accompaniment from Hinson (left), Vermeil is getting himself into the swing of things.

still no longer. Against his doctor's advice he left his house for the Vet. When he walked into the draft room, every Eagle coach and scout was wearing a surgical mask.

By now Vermeil's sense of humor had shriveled. "You sons of bitches," he growled. "I don't think that's real funny."

Training camp began, and Vermeil did not ambush the mistake-makers the way he once had. Part of it was a conscious effort to pace his team, save more of its frenzy for the end, and part stemmed from the hepatitis hangover he could not shake.

July 1982. Charlie Johnson, 30, perhaps the quintessential creation of Vermeil's labor pains, asked to be traded. Too soft in the body, two years behind his football-playing contemporaries because of a stint in Vietnam, he was not

firstborn son. He realized Johnson was not alone. Veterans who had accepted the relentless repetitions and long practices in the program's formative years found them self-defeating now that the Eagles were a playoff team. In seven years under Vermeil, one player insisted, he had fresh legs in just one game.

Once, after three straight losses, the Eagles' staff had poiled the players for theories. Phil LeMaster, a friend of Vermeil's as well as one of his linemen, responded that the players were mentally and physically burned out. At the end of the season, LeMaster got a two-page letter from Vermeil, saying the reason he was tired was because he thought he was tired. LeMaster, who had placed No. 1 on the squad in camp-opening conditioning tests, swallowed hard.

"We didn't always agree with Dick's

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DICK VERMEIL *continued*

ended. Vermeil felt bad that that didn't make him feel good.

He tried to hurl himself back into the same work schedule without the same illusions. It didn't work. He watched film at 2 a.m. and saw nothing. He began to cry during routine locker-room speeches. His neck was so tense that when driving he could not turn it to see in the left lane. At home, he was farther away than ever. "I'd say, 'Dick, I cut off my arm today, but I don't think it's too bad,'" says Carol, "and he wouldn't even blink."

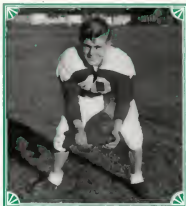
The first Sunday after the strike, the Bengals manhandled an Eagle team whose players were still grumbling about the new union contract. The second week Vermeil hit bottom. At Wednesday's practice, while his team walked through the plays installed for that Sunday's game at Washington, he sat red-eyed in the parking lot. The most powerful motivator in the NFL could not motivate himself to get out of a car.

On Saturday, while his daughter, Nancy, was graduating from Penn State, her father faced a team bus ride to Washington. As the bus filled up in the Vet parking lot, he sat in his car, once again immobilized.

He dined that night with Monsignor Sharkey. The priest had given Vermeil a book entitled *Burn Out* two years earlier, and Vermeil had dismissed it. Now he had read the sections of it underlined by his wife and finally admitted it was happening to him.

After dinner he gathered his team for his ritual night-before oratory. Crying, he told them that if he could not find a way to inspire them, he would "waive Dick Vermeil." At 9:30 p.m. he sat down for a snack. He looked over to a table where his veterans sat, expecting to find them quietly preparing for the game. His crusaders were hunched over copies of the new contract. The next day the Eagles lost again.

"Some guys had started turning Dick off," Jaworski says. "He'd get emotional, and it was 'Here we go again.' The bong



As a sophomore at Calhoun High, Vermeil was a 130-pound halfback.

effect was gone. And we were so much more programmed than other teams, we couldn't just come back after eight weeks and start winning."

When the Eagles lost their third straight game the next Sunday, Tose was waiting for them in the locker room. "You might as well go back on strike!" he rapped at the players.

Vermeil was—and is—a friend of Tose's, but he knew he must act. He took Tose by the wrist. "You men know what I think of Mr. Tose," he rasped. "That wasn't Leonard Tose saying that."

The season was torpedoed: the Eagles sank into last place. "I was afraid we'd get a phone call in the night," says Vermeil's brother Al, until recently an assistant with the 49ers, "saying he'd gone to sleep and hadn't woken up. Cardiac."

In other NFL cities, men were living in hells similar to Vermeil's. Last year seven other head coaches—Marv Levy of the Chiefs, Leeman Bennett of the Falcons, Walt Michaels of the Jets, Chuck Knox of the Bills, Jack Patena of the Seahawks, Ray Malavasi of the Rams and Ray Perkins of the Giants—were either fired from or quit what has become professional sport's most distorted job. In a mobile society in which the fabric of community and neighborhood is unraveling, sports more and more are becoming the

synthetic replacement, football more and more the favored thread—and head coaches more and more the paranoid victims.

A ninth coach, Bill Walsh, nearly fled, too, just a year after winning the Super Bowl. The last month of the season Vermeil and Walsh volleyed phone calls back and forth, trying to motivate each other. The reasons the job has become so preposterous over the last decade, Walsh says, are these:

- Communications. "The media bring every little detail to the public's attention now, which puts more stress on the ownership to win and builds the fans' expectations higher each year."

- Increasing salaries. "In a lot of cases, as the salaries grow the returns we're getting from

players are diminishing."

- Rules changes. "The way they've changed the passing rules, a good team can't dominate the line of scrimmage anymore. The more passing there is, the more variables there are—and the more chance the lesser team will win."

- Parity. "The way the talent is spread in the draft and the way the scheduling is set up, you can go from first to last [as the 49ers did in '82] just like that."

- Drugs. "They have a dramatic impact on the performance of your athletes. They stop sleeping and eating right. In three weeks a great athlete becomes a shell of himself. The coaches who brag the most about their lack of drug problems usually have the biggest problems."

- The USFL. "It's just going to add one more thing for the coach to worry about, and spread the talent even more."

"You have to take the Noll and Landry and Shula approach," Walsh concludes. "Delegate authority to your assistants, relax and breathe deeply. Then we'll probably have assistants burning out. What it all comes down to is that there are now more factors than ever that an NFL coach cannot control."

Says Landry, the Cowboys' coach for all the team's 23 years, who once warned Vermeil during pregame player drills to slow down: "A long time ago I tried to judge what I could and could not control

and stopped worrying about what I couldn't. This was a bad year for coaches because the strike meant there was more we couldn't control than ever. The trouble is, NFL coaching is not musical chairs, like it is for baseball managers who get fired. You don't often get another job if you don't succeed; they're going to kick you out with no pension or medical benefits, and you'll have to struggle all on your own. It's free enterprise at its extreme, and that can mean devastating pressure."

From the NFL's inception, its head coaches have survived an average of 3.2 years with a team. That sort of job and a man like Vermeil was one very cruel piece of matchmaking.

On Jan. 2, at the Eagles' final game, Vermeil cried through the national anthem. He spent the next week summoning a courage most men never find or, at 46, have long since lost—the courage

years she'd never entered into a career decision.

"We're getting out."

"Do you really think so?"

"Yep. Let's do it."

Just then Murray, the Eagles' general manager, telephoned. Now Vermeil was fighting something deeper and stronger and older than the football coach in him, something that made him feel almost as if he was choking as he spoke the words:

"I'm getting out."

Louie Vermeil peers out of the Owl Garage. On his right, just a foot away from this 100-year-old barn he converted into a car-repair shop, stands the Church of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, from where priests used to hurl the name of God against Louie's hammerings and grindings on the Day of Rest. On his left stands his white house, a landmark in California's Napa Valley for having sheltered a

his glasses are tilted down on the front of his nose. His jaw comes out after you even more than his son's. His hands are arthritis-cramped into two tool grips. Grease, an old and eager friend, has left a lick on his forehead.

He slams the hood on a Pinto tune-up and at 72 permits himself the heft of a 4.30 quitting time. He swivels toward the house. In 1972 he suffered a damaged left hip when he was hit by a race car while officiating at Calroga Speedway, of which he's president. He used a broomstick shoved under his armpit while working the next day. Three years later he consented to see a doctor and lay still for an artificial hip socket.

"You should have seen how many cars we had backed up here during World War II because nobody could get parts anywhere and I had to make them," he says. "I had a Model A pickup that sat out here a whole year before I could get to it."

He worked seven days and nights a week during the war, built a reputation as Northern California's finest machanic and then he burned out. In 1946, along with an old high school football teammate, he rebuilt the engine of a 1935 Ford convertible, painted it black with red stripes, bid his family goodby and drove East. He planned to close the Owl Garage when he returned and find work that was less draining. He saw the Indianapolis 500 and he saw Buffalo, which reminded him of San Francisco, and then all this foolishness got to him. "I felt guilty," he says. "I thought, 'What the hell am I doing out here, goofing off?'" He returned to the Owl and never vacationed again.

Now the man whom locals call The Bear pushes open the back door of his house, brushing past the painting that says WELCOME TO VERMEIL'S NEST. It has been 50 years that Louie and his wife, Alice, have been chirping and scolding each other here like a pair of bluejays.

Alice, a woman with a round, friendly face, white-rimmed glasses and blond hair arranged in a small bun, is searching her kitchen for a lost item. "What'd you lose, Mom?" grunts Louie. "Your mind?" Then, in an aside, "Don't ever complement 'em. They'll stay in a rut."

Alice laughs and calls him a knot-headed Frenchman. It is a kind of thing their son Dick never dared say. "I'd come home and tell him I threw three touch-

continued



Vermeil in 1954 with two of his loves: Carol and a '36 Ford that he'd bought for \$15 and restored

to acknowledge that one's values are warped. He knew now what he must do, but after a 23-year torrent of dogma, he found it almost a physical impossibility to work the strange words up his throat.

The following Sunday the Vermeils finished dinner and sat facing each other in their paneled basement.

"I don't know if I can make this decision," he admitted.

"I've already made it," Carol said.

"What do you mean?" he asked. In 23

dreamer named Robert Louis Stevenson and a doer named Richard Allen Vermeil. In front of Louie is a yard full of junked cars and trucks, grave-robbed for their organs and corroded by rust. For five decades, rust and Louie have worked the same hours here.

"You'll laugh," he says, "but as a young man I was fascinated by the thought of working 24 hours straight. I did it, too."

His hat is tilted back on his head and

DICK VERMEIL *continued*

down passes," Dick remembers. "and he'd say, 'Good, go change a flat.' I started working with him the first day after I graduated from grammar school. His automatic response was always to jump your ass. I never saw him sit and relax. I do remember seeing him once, in swimming trunks, at a picnic on the Russian River. Hell, I didn't know if he'd float."

As the eldest of three sons, Dick faced the same hard choice his own eldest son would encounter later: Match the old man's work capacity for the reward of a small nod—or rebel. He craved the nod too much.

Louie and Alice sat at the kitchen table and laugh, recalling the time that Dick quarterbacked Calistoga High to a 14-7 loss in the championship game with St. Helena's. In punt formation, he had chased down a bad snap in a driving rain, had run with the ball and failed to make the first down. "Shoulda punted—you had the time," growled Louie afterward, and Dick burst into tears. While the rest of the team and half the town held a season-ending party in his house, Dick stayed in his room and cried. He didn't know until years later that the man who would not hug or praise him listened on the radio to all of his games as a quarterback at San Jose State, sitting in his car in a rainstorm on the nearest hill when reception was poor.

"I was a critic," Louie says. "I didn't want him to think life was easy. I'd praise him behind his back to everybody. I never realized how much he wanted me to praise him. Hell, my dad worked until he was 86 years old, and whenever I worked for him I'd bust a gut."

"Dick's a little too softhearted, I'd a chewed those players' asses out in Philadelphia. There are three tough nuts in that league—Shula, Grant and Landry. I don't think that Dick could hold a candle to 'em."

"But he'll be back," interjects Alice. "Don't you go getting too excited about all this. I've got a bet with his father: Dick will be back coaching within a year. I know I'm right."

"I just bet to be ornery," grumps

Louie. "Hell, I can't agree with her. He'll be back. It'd be like me leaving the garage. Yeah, he'll be back."

There is a driving rain in Culiacán. Vermeil wades through lagoon mud up to his knees and then turns his face to the rain to watch and wait for the flutter across the western Mexico sky. There it is. He jerks with the kick of his Browning automatic, again and again, and birds drop like thick precipitation. The other hunters in his party finally stop, sore and tired, but when Vermeil is happy with

able with who he is, instead of what he does, still swings back and forth. "It's 50-50 I'll be back coaching," he says. "Hell, I already feel so good I could start tomorrow. If I'd taken another few weeks to decide, I might have stayed. I'm still not sure burnout applies to me..."

Then: "I'll probably spend some time with a psychiatrist. I have to learn to handle my own drives, to stop trying to control so many variables..."

Then: "I don't need a therapist to tell me that. Cripes, I've got more common sense in one hand than most of them have in their body. I'd rather have had the upbringing I had than the reverse approach to work—even rather than moderation. Look what it's done for me. How many people have experienced the highs and lows that I have through football? I might come back as an assistant to a Shula or a Landry, to see how they do it. But hell, if I'd approached it as just a game, I might still be coaching at Hillsdale High. I don't have any regrets..."

Then: "It's time I put my family over my occupation. I'm not an example of what a guy ought to be..."

Darkness covers Culiacán, and at a table in a restaurant Vermeil and his companions, including UCLA alumnus Rob Hixson who had been vainly asking Vermeil to come hunting here for years, fill themselves with shrimp, octopus, whitefish sautéed in onions, marinated scallops and melted Mexican cheese with sausage. They douse it all with wine.

Dinner ends; the margaritas and mariachi band begin. "You know," says Vermeil, "there are other things in life."

Suddenly he jumps up from the table, strides into the middle of the music and commandeers the trumpet. He throws back his head and pours out two songs that he has not attempted since he was a boy, and brown-skinned men who have never seen a football game smile and cheer.

Dick Vermeil laughs so hard he has to remove the horn from his lips.

"Hell," he cries, "I didn't know I could do that!"



Vermeil's rise in coaching began with a league title at Hillsdale.

the hurt in his right shoulder, he switches the shotgun to his left and goes on and on. "This is the first time I've ever gone hunting and thought only about hunting," he says.

He is relaxed and talkative, and all the natural charm has returned. Yet every sunrise still calls forth a new referendum on life without football. He hopes he can live without it. He hopes he becomes so good a commentator for CBS on Sundays that he can bear, perhaps even enjoy, all the relaxation in between. His demon has been staggered, not slain. "If he does not achieve as a broadcaster," says his brother Al, "oh my God."

And so the battle to become comfort-



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COVERING PETE ROSE

Sir:

I enjoyed your superb March 14 cover showing the reunion of three terrific ballplayers—Pete Rose, Joe Morgan and Tony Perez—and the accompanying article in *Philadelphia*. They're the Wheeze Kids. However, that was a misguided jibe that Rose made to Perez, when Rose said, "You caddied for Yastrzemski. How does it feel to be caddying for a real ballplayer now?" Yaz has been a great player for years. And this comment comes from a player who in 1978 whined when Atlanta's Gene Garber threw him nothing but junk during the time at bat that ended his National League-record hitting streak at 44. Tsk, tsk, Pete.

BOB DAVIES
Upper Merion, N.J.

Sir:

I would like to know who Pete Rose thinks he is. His remark about Perez now being a caddie to a real ballplayer was a rotten, slanderous and unpatriotic thing to say about Carl Yastrzemski, a class player and a tremendous individual. I never cared for Rose and his hot-dog style. He could use a lesson or two in humility.

K. ROBERGE
Bridford, Maine

Sir:

I commend you on your fine article on the Wheeze Kids, three of the best players who ever played. The story also showed how inept Dick Wagner, president of the Cincinnati Reds, has been. Mr. Wagner can go on defending the reasons why Perez was traded, Rose became a free agent and Morgan left, but Cincinnati fans were not fooled then and they're not fooled today. There is only one reason why there are only four players remaining on the Reds from the 1976 world champions. Mr. Wagner and the rest of the Cincinnati management are cheap!

DENNIS HELFERICH
Cincinnati

SPINKS THE CHAMPION

Sir:

I was touched by Calvin Fussman's article on Michael Spinks (*A Yawning Gap in His Life*, March 14). It was written with a rare sensitivity toward blacks. I understand the hurt and pain that Michael is going through. On New Year's Eve, five of my friends were killed on that same Schuylkill Expressway. I was in total shock. One always hears about these things happening to others, but never really cares, because he never knew the victims. This article really unlocked feelings of grief and sorrow to be shared with Michael.

God bless you, Michael, and keep on striving.

ALONZO E. DELAINE
Philadelphia

Sir:

Your recent article on Michael Spinks showed him to be a sensitive and caring individual, and we here in St. Augustine, Fla., can heartily agree. The Sertoma Club of St. Augustine has been trying to raise \$85,000 for medical expenses for Garry Punsary, Jr., an 11-month-old who needs a liver transplant. Michael, who was training in St. Augustine, took out many hours from his training schedule to help out and head up our fund-raising efforts. Michael has dedicated his fight with Braxton to Garry and has promised to stay with this "fight for life" until the necessary funds are raised, a liver donor is found and little Garry is healthy once again. We here in St. Augustine who have had the opportunity to work with Michael in this effort have gained a great respect and love for this man who also happens to be a super boxer.

Anyone wishing to help Spinks and Sertoma in our battle can send a check payable to "Michael Fights For Garry" to the Sertoma Club, St. Augustine, Fla., 32084.

ALAN FLOTTIS
St. Augustine, Fla.

COMMUNIST PLOT

Sir:

It was with satisfaction that I read Brian Lynch's letter in the March 14 *19TH HOLE*, especially the part about soccer representing Communism. How did he find out?

For years we have kept it a secret. Remember Soviet leaders saying they would take over the U.S. without firing a shot? Well, soccer is the plan they are using. What better way to conquer a country than through youth. Soon we will bring in all of the Connie, soccer-playing kids in America to surround the Pentagon, at which time the players will drill in-step drives until the capitalist warmongers surrender.

I truly believe that Lynch and those like him have been playing football without their helmets too long!

COMRADE LARRY LANTZ
Little Rock, Ark.

RANDY'S PROBLEM

Sir:

After reading Val Wilson's article (*Viewpoint*, March 14), I was incensed. Her feelings are a perfect example of the reversal of priorities in America today. She appears to be rejecting her school psychometrist's diagnosis that severe dyslexia is the cause of her son's academic difficulties. Instead, she bemoans the fact that her son was removed from the

wrestling team because of his English grade. It is absolutely appalling that Ms. Wilson should place the boy's proficiency at pounding someone's head into a wrestling mat above his academic problems. Also, her question "Would it be just to tell a child he couldn't qualify for computer class because he couldn't punt a football?" is a most blatant example of convoluted logic.

We must begin to reassess sports and their influence in America, from Pee Wee Baseball to the Super Bowl. Athletics are fine—so a point. But when they begin to dominate the truly important facets of a person's life, something has gone amiss.

GEORGE CHARLSEN
Linthicum, Md.

Sir:

Although I respect Ms. Wilson's feelings, I beg to differ with her logic and reasoning.

The primary reason we have schools and colleges is to educate. Sports is extracurricular. Special education is offered for those students who suffer from learning disabilities such as dyslexia.

I understand Ms. Wilson's concern for her son's future, but by letting him have a free ticket through the educational system to play sports is only going to hurt him in the long run. Suppose Randy does rise to professional athletic stardom. When his career is over and he's pushing 35, what's he going to do?

MICHAEL P. O'BRIEN
Saginaw, Mich.

Sir:

As a mother, sports fan and former teacher, my heart goes out to Val Wilson and her son, Randy. I hope that Randy can find a sports program outside the school in which he can participate. Self-esteem is so important at his age. I was reminded by Ms. Wilson's article of how fortunate I am that my own son maintained "good grades" that kept him on his football team. That doesn't mean, however, that I can't see the educational flaw Ms. Wilson writes of. By preventing poor students from playing sports, boards of education are creating another of the "cracks" that students fall through en route to dropping out of school.

LINDA C. MEREDITH
Washington, D.C.

AN OFF-COURT ALL-STAR

Sir:

I feel that you have done an injustice to LaRue Martin (*The View from Section 16*, *Row EE*, Feb. 21). Over the last decade, LaRue has faced criticism and hardship in his chosen profession and withstood tremendous pressures placed upon him by the public and

continued

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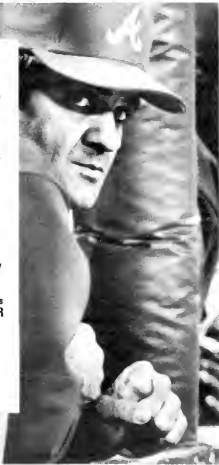
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10TH HOLE continued

the media. He has managed to go on living, having grown from his experiences and shared his knowledge with others. I would like to share with you a "hidden" side of this man, who is not only an exemplary citizen but, more important, an extremely warm-hearted human being.

Along with other retired and active professional athletes living in the Portland metropolitan area, LaRue has volunteered his time to serve as a leader in Project PASS (Pro Athletes for Student Success), which was established in 1982 under the direction of my Council on Health, Fitness and Sports. Project PASS has been designed to caution elementary-through-high-school-level students about the hazards of drug and alcohol abuse. This has been accomplished through class visitations from individuals like LaRue who have proven that success in the classroom is at least as valuable as success on the playing field.

The number of hours LaRue and the others spend counseling the young people of our state has gone largely unrecorded, but the benefit to our society is pronounced. These professionals serve as role models to a generation that is faced with greater social pressures at an earlier age than any before it. These fine individuals are sacrificing their time to demonstrate by example that today's true heroes do not need foreign substances to gain an advantage, but need only the proper frame of mind, desire and preparation.

I commend LaRue and the countless others for their efforts. LaRue may not have reached All-Star status in the NBA, but he has in his community. It may be easier to recount his failures as a professional athlete, but I would urge you to judge LaRue Martin on more than his performance on the basketball court. His record in life, helping others, deserves recognition.

VIC FOR ATTYEH
Governor
Salem, Ore

DR. J (CONT.)

Sir

Reading your article on the Philadelphia 76ers and Julius Erving (*This May Be One for the Books*, Feb. 28) brought back memories. In the eighth grade I was 6' 6" and towering over students and teachers. Our freshman team, composed of eighth- and ninth-graders, was superb. I started in center and scored 20 points a game. But I was not the star. I had the privilege of playing with Julius, as fantastic a human being as he is a basketball player. If memory serves me correctly, our team did not lose a game.

Even so, Julius and I stayed after each practice and went one-on-one. I had almost a foot on Julius, but he was a fierce competitor. I beat him most of the time, but he would never complain that I was too tall. He would just keep trying and trying harder. When he won he was a gracious winner, and when he lost he

took it well, his sportsmanship showing even then.

My career, however, did not blossom like Erving's. An unfortunate accident ruined both my knees that year. I was never to play with Julius again, but he kept in contact with me during the long months in the hospital. Even if the 76ers do not win the championship this year, I want Philadelphia to realize what a true winner Erving is.

MIKE CATALANO
Horsing Ridge, N.J.

SWIMSUITS (CONT.)

Sir

The swimsuit feature (*Falling for Jamaica*, Feb. 14) struck a nerve with me. As a certified interior horticultural I applaud photographer Walter Ito's use of the *Pandanus* units as a perch for the nerve-striking Cheryl Tiegs. However, a few pages later, there's Carol Alt, also a horticulturist's delight, posing at Port Antonio not amid philodendrons, as you say, but amid *Euphorbia* aureum, commercially known as pothos or devil's ivy.

As the natural chairperson for the Interior Plantscape Association's Technical Advisory Council I felt a need to write this letter of correction. The thrust of my chairpersonship is to create consumer awareness of tropical foliage plants. I can't think of a better way than Sal's pairing of beautiful women with beautiful plants.

MICHAEL J. MCCOMBE
Van Nuys, Calif.

MINNESOTA HOCKEY (CONT.)

Sir

I disagree with E.M. Swift's contention (*The Thrill of a Lifetime*, March 7) that Minnesota's high school hockey tourney is "perhaps" the premier schoolboy tournament in the country. Anyone who has ever lived in Indiana knows that the boys' basketball tournament here is No. 1. Since 1911, any school in the state can participate and the small-school large-school confrontation makes the tourney second to none in drama and excitement.

There were 400 schools already entered by 1921 and the number of entries swelled to a high of 787 by 1938. Because of a number of consolidations, closings and the like, the school entered is down to fewer than 400 today. Still, the final round last year drew two 17,000-plus crowds in one day, and more than a million other fans watched on a seven-channel statewide network.

If you want to do an article on the oldest, largest, most prestigious and coveted schoolboy championship in the country, experience Hoosier hysteria sometime.

MARK A. ANDLER
Osceola, Ind.

Letters should include the name, address and home telephone number of the writer and be addressed to The Editor, SPORTS ILLUSTRATED, Time & Life Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10103.

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